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NEW STATESMAN

After Harold Wilson

James Fenton: The Struggle to Succeed

Paul Johnson: The Plight of the Left

Donald Gould on Miracle Cures

Spring Books

Malcolm Bradbury John Fowles Philip French Martin Amis Valentine Cunningham Russell Davies

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The Choice Before Labour

To say that nothing became Mr Wilson's premiership like his leaving of it must inevitably sound a bit of a back-handed compliment. Yet that hardly alters the fact that he has earned very high marks indeed for the astonishing *coup de théâtre* with which he has brought his reign to an end – a *coup* that, partly because of its personal modesty and partly because of its sensitivity to the long-term needs of the party, already promises to lead to the most ordered transition of power in recent British political history. It was always the summit of Mr Wilson's ambition to translate Labour into 'the natural governing party of Britain'; and by the way in which he has organised and orchestrated his own departure he may yet prove to have made his most lasting contribution towards that end.

Fortunately no great doctrinal dispute – as it did in 1955 and, to a lesser extent, in 1963 – hangs over next week's contest. There are many aspects of Mr Wilson's leadership with which the NEW STATESMAN has quarrelled down the years; but from the moment, as one of his first acts as party leader, that he restored the party whip to the five 'excluded brethren' in 1963 (one of them, incidentally, Mr Michael Foot), he has always stood by his own characterisation of the Labour Party as 'a broad church'. Of course a hard – and, for some, harsh – decision requires to be taken (and let us hope for the last time in the restricted context that it will be taken next week or the week after). It is certainly an advance that the Labour Party should successfully have served notice on the Palace that the business of selecting a prime minister for Britain in the 20th century is nothing whatever to do with the Royal Prerogative; but the next stage of that democratic journey must be a recognition that it should not solely be the business of 317 Labour MPs either.

The rules, however, this time at least, are still there; and it is according to them that the election will have to be conducted. That, though, makes it all the more important that the candidate eventually elected should not look like someone chosen by a papal consistory against the wish of the wider church. Mr Roy Jenkins and Mr Anthony Crosland have given considerable services to the present Government and, for many years, to the Labour Party in Parliament; but it is an undeniable fact that neither is able to command the same support in the Labour movement as a whole as each possesses within the PLP. The same objection certainly does not apply to Mr Tony Benn – in fact some might argue that with him the converse is the case. He stands for many of the causes that the NEW STATESMAN favours – including the one of fuller party democracy outlined above; but, whether through fault of his own or not, his is at the moment a divisive voice both within the party and the country. His hour may still come – but it has not arrived yet.

There is, in fact, a great deal to be said for the Labour Party choosing in this election an interim (or transitional) leader; and there are certainly two obvious candidates who could be said to fill that bill. Both are older than Mr Wilson and each, in a paradoxical way, has much the same arguments going for him. The party outside Parliament and the trade unions would probably be equally happy with either Mr Michael Foot or Mr James Callaghan. Certainly they are men of very different gifts – and it says much for the new ecumenicism of the Labour movement that in 1976 (as opposed to 1963) they should no longer be seen as polar opposites. The NEW STATESMAN has urged Mr Foot's election to the leadership before; and we would certainly – along, we suspect, with more ordinary voters than Labour MPs may realise – be very happy to see him in the job now. Reality, however, forces the recognition that he is unlikely to be able to get the same broad-based support within the PLP as Mr Callaghan. And that, if the mood which Mr Wilson created is to continue, is probably the crucial factor. Mr Callaghan is not only the candidate most likely to command the unity of the entire Labour movement: he is also the man most likely to commend Labour to the country. Labour MPs, in our view, will be wise to elect him on the first ballot next week – and, failing that, will at least make sure he arrives in Downing Street the week after.

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Spotlight on Politics

James Fenton

The Struggle to Succeed

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of reticence, it was the age of recrimination, it was the epoch of surprise, it was the epoch of the knowing nod, it was the season of tributes, it was the season of scandal, it was the spring of Callaghan, it was the winter of Healey, we had everything under control, we had made a terrible mess, we were on the verge of a massive boom, we were on the road to bankruptcy – in short, it was a period so brimming over with news that, even when the news broke, it had to fight its way on to the front pages in the popular press. In the bowels of the Palace of Westminster, in the corridors and lobbies which your correspondent is forbidden by lobby rules to describe, indescribable people formed unimaginable knots to exchange their unspeakable opinions. And the first question was – had there been a plot against Healey?

He must be kicking himself, they said, he's hopping mad, he was set up. Those of the Left who, on the previous night, had been maintaining a high moral tone – drinking soft drinks and preferring to talk about novels – those who had been licking their wounds over the weekend, and reckoning that their final ace had been trumped, were finding it difficult (or inappropriate) to conceal their triumph. They were back on the hard stuff. Indeed you might have thought at times that the resignation of Wilson had been part of Left's grand scheme. Whatever the future might hold, at least they had done for Healey.

As to the conspiracy theory, it is not in the first instance applicable. Mr Healey's loutish behaviour on Wednesday last week, when he stood over Mr Dennis Canavan shouting 'You fucker, you fucker, you fucker', was not the result of a cabinet decision. On Thursday, however, the cabinet had decided that Mr Healey should deal roundly with the Left, Mr Wilson had assented, and Mr Callaghan is said to have egged Mr Healey on. It is also said (and this would complete the conspiracy) that Mr Callaghan knew by then that the Prime Minister was going to resign. Mr Healey went ahead and attacked the Left, lost his place in his speech and began to improvise abuse over the hubbub, earning not only the hatred of the Left but also the deep distrust of the Right. The trap, if there was a trap, was sprung.

In the calm of last Monday, when the most exciting thing in politics was the prospect of the return of Mr Jo Grimond (at least Mr John Pardoe found it exciting), the Members' tea-room received an unusual visitor. Mr James Callaghan was doing the rounds, chatting up the boys and reinforcing his image as Uncle Jim. I am told that Mr Callaghan makes these trips from time to time. Thus one MP, I forget who, was astonished that night to find himself talking to the Foreign Secretary, on amiable and familiar terms, for the second time in his life. Mr Callaghan was always careful to prepare the ground. Hence the following conversation, dated a few months ago, between two of the New Men.

First New Man: 'You know, if Jim becomes leader I'm going to become a minister.'

Second New Man (suppressing a pang): 'Oh really, is that so?'

First New Man: 'Ye-e-es, he's told me himself. And so are 200 other members of the PLP.'

While it was possible to find any number of Members who would vote for Mr Callaghan on either the first or the second ballot, I failed to find one who would do the same for Mr Healey. And yet, if Mr Healey spent Tuesday kicking himself and desperately regretting the fact that he's such an uncontrollable bully and thug, Mr Jenkins too must have been wishing that he'd prepared the ground a little better, a little earlier. Mr Jenkins has supporters, strong supporters, and no doubt enough of them to do very well on the first ballot. But they are apparently the wrong sort of supporters, and the Left will certainly prefer the right-wing-left-winger to the left-wing-right-winger. This may be a difficult distinction to grasp, and I don't pretend to understand it fully myself, but it seems to amount to the following: Mr Callaghan, as party treasurer and in other ways over the years, has made friends with the trade unions and the Left; so it doesn't matter that his personal views are considered filthy; whereas Mr Jenkins keeps filthy company, so it doesn't help him if his personal views are considered liberal.

Of the two left-wing candidates, Mr Tony Benn is the controversial one. Indeed, were he to get anywhere, the fight for the leadership would have to become indeological.

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Mr Michael Foot is non-controversial. He is a member of the present troika, the architect of the entente between Labour and the unions, and is identified with Government policy, but not blamed for it (except by the Tories). Those who successfully urged him to stand did so on the promise that, even though he won't win, it is his duty to muster as large a vote as possible in the name of the Left. In the final ballot, Mr Foot's votes would be transferred to Mr Callaghan, and thus the Left could claim to have put Jim in power. On this scenario, it would have been considered a good thing if Mr Benn had not stood.

On the other hand, there is this thing about 'putting down a marker' (an expression which together with 'hats in the ring' will no doubt drive us crazy over the next couple of weeks), by which it is meant that a candidate who wishes to be considered in the next election has to have a go in this one.

Mr Benn, at time of going to press, is only 50. By the time Mr Callaghan has led us into the valley of the shadow of death, by the time Labour has lost the next election, Mr Benn will be maturing nicely. On these grounds alone he is right to put down a marker now, just as Wilson put down a marker when he stood against Gaitskell. Against this it is argued that, since Labour is electing a prime minister, this is no time to play silly buggers. It is a time for high seriousness, a time for the men of destiny to stand up and be counted. Is Mr Benn a man of destiny – yet? And will his platform be taken seriously?

However the left-wing vote divides up, it is clear that the *Tribune* MPs ought to take Mr Benn very seriously at least on the first ballot. He is after all campaigning specifically on those issues which divide the Labour Party. What is more, he appears to be taken seriously, as an opponent, by Mr Anthony Crosland. All this adds zest to the campaign. Mr Crosland, who was described this week as the thinking man's candidate with the drinking man's breath, may have more gravitas than Mr Benn, and more intellectual weight than any of the other candidates, but he suffers in proportion to the strength of the other right-wing candidates. He is another man who must be wishing that he'd known about the timing of the resignation, wishing that he'd paid a little more attention to Mr Nigel Dempster, or Lord Goodman, or that he'd suborned the Speaker. Indeed, of all the candidates, both those who have and those who have not in the end come forward, Mr Callaghan is the only one for whom the timing is right.

Whatever the outcome, and despite the assurance by Mr Wilson that he is not going to interfere in the election, the terms of choice have been decided by the timing of the resignation. The Labour Party will be looking for another Harold Wilson, and if they choose Mr Callaghan they will get, quite simply, a little less of the same old medicine. Mr Wilson will retire to the back benches, and will be able to watch, with satisfaction no doubt, a prime minister cast from his own mould – I wish somebody would take the mould, and break it, before any further casts are made.

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Paul Johnson

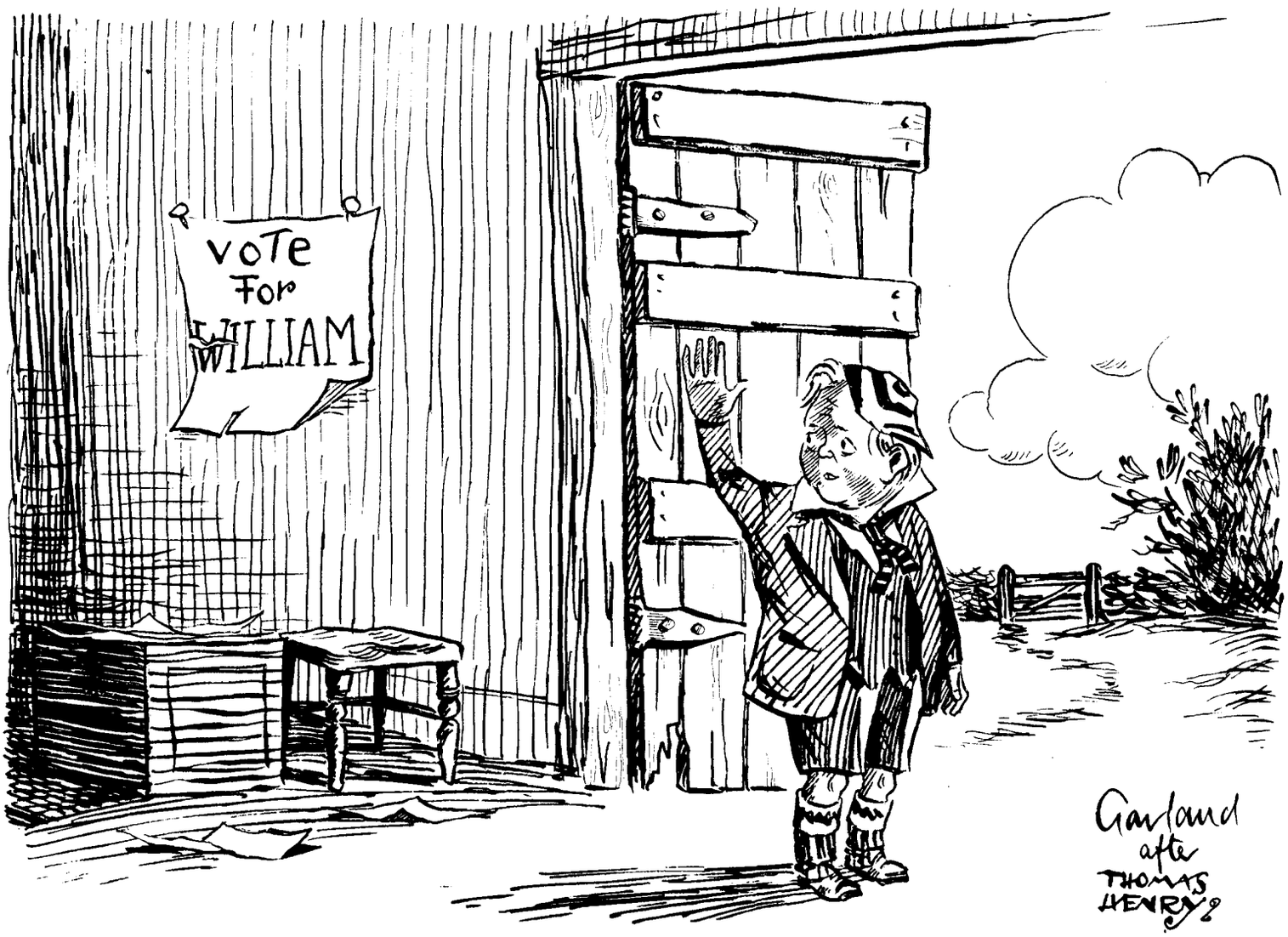
The Plight of the Left

It says a lot for the intellectual disintegration of Labour's Left that the abrupt departure of Harold Wilson has not only taken them totally by surprise but finds them without any strategy whatsoever. Here they are in striking contrast to their Bevanite predecessors. In the 1950s, their criticism of Labour's leadership was based upon a coherent economic philosophy and a carefully worked-out alternative programme. Though no one could match the oratory with which Bevan expressed it, behind him there were a dozen first-class political brains and a real measure of administrative talent. Hence, the Left was able to survive the sudden death of Nye; and when in turn, Hugh Gaitskell was struck down – an event almost as sudden and unpredictable as Wilson's resignation – the Left was ready to present its challenge to the party establishment, with a designated leader, an agreed programme and a first-class organisation.

Today, the Left is in panic, not least because of its antics last week. It is not so much an organised, articulate and calculating ideological faction as a kind of parliamentary football mob, braying slogans and shouting abuse, and anticipating – one feels – the day when all rational discussion will be scrapped and punch-up politics will take over. 'I hope there is a row at next week's party meeting,' says one *Tribune* pugilist, 'I shall certainly be in there swiping myself.' It is characteristic of the more mindless Marxists first to destroy serious discussion, and then brazenly to lay the blame on their opponents. It does not seem to me that Messrs Wilson and Healey were particularly offensive in their treatment of the Left last week.

Harold Wilson knew it was his swan-song, and he wanted the occasion to be a demonstration of his political mastery rather than his command of invective. Anyway, prime ministers and chancellors who have been defeated by their followers on the floor of the House are surely entitled to show displeasure. Yet the two ministers have been subjected to a volume of orchestrated Billingsgate rarely heard on this side of the Iron Curtain; reminiscent, in fact, of the mechanised verbal ferocity which marks the culmination of power-struggles in Moscow, Peking, Tirana and other points East. Wilson and Healey are filled with 'hysterical fear', they are behaving 'hysterically'; they are 'sterile'; indulging in 'the rottenness of parliamentary patronage', concealing their betrayals by 'undignified verbal attacks' and 'a very special brand of parliamentary thuggery'; they are 'political thugs', or alternatively 'blustering and bullying . . . frightened men'; respectable *Tribune*ite ladies did not 'come into Parliament to be obscenely abused by bullyboys'; Mr Healey in particular 'just disintegrated', and his language was 'unprintable and obscene in the extreme', he behaved like 'a completely irresponsible man', a 'drunken oaf' and a 'taproom brawler'. The choice of phrase has the weird Dickensian archaism beloved of *Pravda* hacks, for it must be years since even the oldest *Tribune*ite got the chance to visit a taproom to watch the brawling.

Of course this hyperinflation of language springs from a very understandable cause. The know-nothing Left have been stripped, exposed, degraded and humbled. They have been revealed as ranting impostors, screaming their deathless devotion to 'socialist' principles, and then scurrying to conform at



'I'm not doin' anythin' else,' interposed William, 'I'm sick of bein' Prime Min'ster. I'm sick of pol'tics all together. There isn't any sense *in 'em. I'd sooner be a Red Indian anyday. I'll give up bein' Prime Min'ster to you an'* you *c'n start doin' things.'*

— William – Prime Minister, by Richmal Crompton

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the first sniff of the whips' leather. Maybe a canine metaphor is not so amiss after all: last Thursday night, some of the Left did present the image of a pack of curs, snarling and whining their impotent rage as they were flogged back into obedience. One made an obscene gesture at ministers, and chanted 'Bastard, bastard!' – as he trotted off to be the first to vote for them. Another shouted out 'Stalinists, Stalinists!' – all the way into the government lobby. What is the message of the *Tribune*ites to the toiling millions? It is that the Labour Party is run by frightened and hysterical bullyboys, drunken oafs, taproom brawlers, bastards and Stalinists, and that, taking all in all, and bearing in mind this and that, and in all the circumstances and at the end of the day, the only thing to do is to vote for them.

One may well ask: why are the *Tribune*ites so afraid to turn out the Government if, as they claim, they – and not ministers – speak for the millions of ordinary working-class voters? But it is precisely at this point that the bluff of the Left can be called. In their secret minds and hearts they recognise that they are a small group of unconvincing extremists whose only hope of exerting influence is by operating cunningly within the great amorphous body of the Labour movement, and whose sole chance of power is to prey upon the parliamentary insecurity of a Labour government.

That is why they will put up with any humiliation rather than submit their claims to the test of a democratic vote. They know that if they beat the Government and so precipitated a general election, Labour would almost certainly be defeated, and that more than half of their own number would lose their seats. They also know, and this is even more crucial to their tactics, that if, following such an act of treachery, they were deprived of the Labour Party's countenance, and forced to appear before the electors under their own political colours, not a single one of them could hope to get himself, or herself, elected to Parliament.

The events of last week have served a real purpose in bringing this critical fact right into the open. The know-nothing Left has no alternative to behaving in a cowardly fashion because it has a great deal to be cowardly about: it has no mass popular support, and survives purely by virtue of its nominal Labour label; once it loses that, it is finished. True, in recent years, the Left appeared to possess a real power basis by its alliance with certain trade union leaders. But those days are over. Messrs Wilson and Foot, by dint of extraordinary concessions and a vast and painful amount of boot-licking, have managed to detach the key trade union leaders from the Left. Harold Wilson would claim this was his last service to the party. The price paid is a heavy one in terms of human liberty, but Mr Wilson would argue that the reward has been worth it: he has begun to recreate the party leadership-trade union alliance which was the mainstay and ballast of the Attlee epoch, and which had ceased to exist since the death of Hugh Gaitskell. Mr Jack Jones may not behave with quite the slam-bang crudity of Arthur Deakin, but he and others are now dutifully performing the same role; and the bonds which unite them to the Government are likely to be tightened by the atmosphere of venomous personal abuse and open enmity which the abortive *Tribune* revolt has created. This is an important development in British politics. The trade union movement is once more part of the Labour Establishment and severed from the Marxists by a deep and widening chasm.

Does this mean that the new party leader will be able to dismiss the claims of the *Tribune* Left to have a share in shaping policy? It looks like it. Mr Wilson believes most of the mistakes he has made in the past two years arose from an over-estimation of Left-wing strength, and a corresponding willingness to concede them points in reaching decisions. His successor's best hope of steering Labour to an election victory in, say, autumn 1977 or spring 1978 is to push the Government more firmly into a centre posture. This means not only ignoring *Tribune*ite clamour but reversing many of the assumptions on which the present Government has been conducted. Of course there is a risk that, in exasperated fury, some of the *Tribune*ites will smash up the Government. But this is probably the least of the many dangers which Mr Wilson now faces. For the choice of the *Tribune* group is a pitiful one: between abject servility on the one hand, or political extinction on the other. In view of their long record of pusillanimous hedging, there can be little doubt they will prefer to remain in the safe Labour pastures than jeopardise their careers in the cold world outside. No one can quite match Harold Wilson in straddling the divisions in the Labour Party. But the new leader will enter office knowing that the Left, if not exactly dead, has been successfully emasculated.

John Porteous

The Pound in Your Pocket

It is a general rule in money matters that anything which you think you can foresee will either happen more quickly than you suppose, or not at all. Such aphorisms are not infallible, and this one has failed in recent weeks.

Last October the sterling-dollar exchange rate stood at $2.04. If you had then asked any banker what the rate would be by this March, he would probably have based his prediction upon a very simple sum. The rate of inflation in the US was running at an annual rate of about 6 per cent. The British inflation rate, on the other hand, might come down towards 12 per cent, but could scarcely average less than 16 per cent. Allow, therefore, an annual difference of 10 per cent more between them and devalue sterling by 5 per cent over six months. The predicted rate of exchange for March on this basis was about $1.94.

Yet although the preliminary assumptions proved roughly correct, on 4 March the exchange rate still stood at $2.02. Nor was this level artificially maintained by a high interest rate. The interest rate differential between London and New York was at its highest three months ago. In January and February it fell steadily. In late February, when the US Federal Reserve engineered a sudden rise in short-term interest rates in order to moderate the increase in the American money supply, the Bank of England conspicuously did not follow this lead and the differential narrowed further. On the very day when sterling's firm front began to give way the Bank's minimum lending rate, still impelled by the downward momentum built up in the domestic money market since November, was cut by a further ¼ per cent.

One must look, therefore, for other causes of the strength of sterling during those six months. Maybe it was cheap to start with. Certainly the balance of payments developed favourably throughout the period. Perhaps the world was impressed by the way in which the gigantic public deficit was financed through the gilt-edged market. Whatever one may think of these arguments, the pressure at that time was not on sterling but on the franc and the lira. The conventional wisdom was that we should need to look out for sterling only when the franc was devalued.

Suddenly these comfortable assumptions were swept away. There is still no certain public knowledge of what happened in the foreign exchange market during these critical days. The only certain fact is that on the afternoon of Thursday 4 March the Bank of England went into the market and sold some £85m. sterling.

In theory there is nothing unusual about a central bank selling its own currency. The Bundesbank does it almost every day. But the Bank of England's interventions are nearly always in the opposite direction. What actually was the Bank up to? Was it selling sterling on behalf of a foreign holder of sterling reserves? Was it making a dashing attempt to add to our own foreign currency reserves. Was it showing its colours as a good European, aiding the hard-pressed franc?

At the time the Bank was thought to be selling for account of a foreigner, namely Nigeria. This has since been privately denied, but the coincidence of the selling with the expulsion of Britain's ambassador to Lagos was enough for the market.

Once the myth of the stronger sterling rate was dispelled, the market's reaction was immediate and there was a rush to sell the currency. The sight of this formidable human tide, which at the flood overwhelms the most resolute and concerted efforts by central banks to stem it, always makes authoritarians want to reach for a new battery of exchange controls. But the government of a free nation dependent upon foreign trade is wiser to let the tide roll on and find its own level. The first wave of currency speculation is one which gov-

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ernments can, and sometimes do, contain and counteract by means of their own intervention in the market. But they cannot do this effectively if the speculation is based upon sound calculation and reason. For then there follows a steady and obstinate build-up of commercial leads and lags and, once that sets in, the world market is too strong for any central bank.

The Bank's first intervention, as the exchange rate sank to $1.94 was a token amount. Later, as the rate sank below $1.91, much larger amounts of reserves were, with the Treasury's consent, thrown into the defence. The Government's defeat in the House of Commons prompted further selling of sterling, which no doubt cost a fair bit more to the reserves, so much of which consist of Mr Healey's recent IMF drawing. The violence and suddenness of sterling's decline is embarrassing politically for the Government, domestically in its relationship with the trade unions as the next phase of incomes policy comes up for discussion, and externally as the trading nations of the Western world watch each other more closely for signs that one may be trying to steal a march on the others by competitive devaluations. But movements in exchange rates are not the bankers' ramps which populist demonology would make them out to be. In the longer term they always come to reflect underlying realities.

As socialists we make ourselves ridiculous when we lament that with a fixed exchange rate we find our hands tied by the exigencies of monetary policy, but that with a floating rate and easy money a horrid world stacks the exchange rate against us and puts up our import and food costs as fast as we put up our own wages.

We still have to learn how far we overstepped the mark in the years of the Heath-Barber expansion and then the year of the social contract and unearned 30-per-cent wage rises. The illusion of those years was built on credit, which we treated as though we should never have to pay it back.

Now, however, the reckoning is coming in, and one must express surprise that Mr Wilson has chosen to resign just at the moment when the only choice before his government is in what coin we decide to pay it. We may pay it in the form of unchanged wages and higher prices, as our currency is devalued and our import costs rise. Or we may pay it in the form of reduced public services and unchanged taxes, as we take the strain of the interest costs with which we have been saddled by the immense public deficits of recent years.

The White Paper on Public Expenditure and now the devaluation of sterling have warned us that we shall soon be experiencing a two-way stretch on our standard of living. 'This is too buch for be,' the Elephant's Child protested when he was at the beginning of a similar ordeal. The bullying posture which Mr Healey has adopted towards those who are making the same complaint may be likened to that of the Bi-Coloured Python Rock Snake. But if he or his successor does not anchor us firmly to a sound monetary policy, and keep us anchored to it remorselessly, our future career will be prematurely vitiated. We must not mistake the Chancellor for the Crocodile.

David Leitch

Giscard's Double Trouble

Caesar wakes up on the Ides of March (the 15th, classicists will recall) and over his breakfast *croissant* is suddenly filled with a sense of foreboding. It is one of those days, he notices out of the Palace window, when his capital is not sizzling, but drizzling. *Tant pis.* The only paper he can face is *Le Figaro,* usually friendly to the point of unction.

As he examines page one the noble brow is creased with pain. His currency has been devalued, in humiliating circumstances, which reflect on him personally. Two-thirds of his people have turned out to vote at local elections, which suggests serious intent, and about two-thirds of these have voted against him.

The more headlines he reads, the worse it gets. The high school students are having a strike, which is always bothering. And so too are the Métro workers, and their colleagues who operated the capital's suburban services.

This in turn, so the radio says, has brought all traffic on the city's major ring-road to a complete halt. The rain makes it worse, and some queues of stationary vehicles are *nine miles* long. Turning to the *Figaro* editorial – where else? – in search of support, Caesar is appalled to find it might have been penned by Calpurnia herself.

Not only is it heavy with recriminations, it seems to contain the direst warnings, all the more troubling for being general and vague. It is headlined 'The Losers', ominously enough, and it starts by saying that the biggest loser of all is, yes, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, the President.

There is, in all seriousness, a good case to be made for seeing 15 March as a kind of watershed for the Giscard government. Certainly it brought the least favourable concatenation of events – from the franc devaluation to the surprisingly large swing to the Left, and above all to the Socialists, in the cantonal elections – which Giscard has faced since taking office in June 1974.

François Mitterrand said last week that he would regard a Socialist vote of 25 per cent as 'very satisfactory indeed' and the actual percentage (30.9) has left party workers genuinely surprised. No one predicted that the (very serious) efforts made recently by the Communists, who ended with only a disappointing 17.4 per cent, would in the event benefit the Socialists more than themselves. Some of Mitterrand's advisers actually feared the reverse.

There is obviously going to be friction about this on the Left, and Georges Marchais has already complained about the 'lack of discipline' among Socialist voters. By this he means that when it came to it some of them abstained rather than vote for a Communist.

His complaint is perfectly just but in the new situation, 'a serious reverse in the Government's popularity' to quote *Le Figaro,* is almost an irrelevance. What has happened is that by some psephological alchemy the Opposition, that is the two left-wing parties, with the Socialists becoming the senior partner, have now emerged as a solid block of anti-government voters. The government base for support, in contrast, now appears oddly nebulous. It comprises 6.2 per cent from various centrist parties, 8.2 from Giscard's own Independent Republicans, and a humiliating 11.8 per cent from the Gaullists.

It is easy, though probably not very useful, to calculate the size of a 1978 left-wing majority in Parliament by playing around with computer projections of these figures. More to the point, the left-wing machine is now ideally placed to capitalise on these gains at next year's municipal elections, a kind of half-way house before the legislative polls the year after.

This is the extent of President Giscard's strictly domestic set-back. The question of the franc has wider implications, and so does the tone of *Figaro*'s 'Losers' editorial:

The worst loser of all is the President of

Roger Woddis

Knight of the Long Knives

'I have become increasingly concerned about the way I seemed to be going round in circles making the same complaints and getting nowhere.' – Sir Richard Marsh, 15 March.

We know the feeling, Richard,
Oh yes, we know it well,
This undefinable sensation
Of having missed our destination
And where we are is hell.

The rails that slide together
Behind you as you go
Are narrower and more remote
Than they appeared when Eliot wrote,
And more than twice as slow.

The curse will not be ended,
The crooked not made straight
Till we no longer, sunk in gloom,
Hear the distorted voice of doom:
'The 4.15 is late.'

Your cuts have left the carcase
With nothing more to carve,
Yet as you sadly now depart
A cry goes up from every heart:
'Let not poor Dickie starve.'

Fare forward, noble voyager,
Your punishment is harsh,
But fate may hand you, as director
And kneeling to the private sector,
A rise, Sir Richard Marsh.

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the Republic, who took the calculated risk – and badly calculated – eight months ago of gearing the value of our currency to that of the West Germans, leaving only a narrow margin for fluctuation.

Here is the authentic voice of French big business, who were always against the franc returning to 'the snake', and have now been proved right. This is very bad for Giscard, the basis of whose appeal has always been a reputation for financial wizardry which he deservedly acquired during the long years as De Gaulle's finance minister. The implication is that Giscard has lost his touch.

His attachment to 'the snake', so many business leaders feel, was always a kind of political *bella figura*, lacking in realism, and dictated more by a desire to cut a dash in the EEC than the exigencies of France's economic problems. The enforced devaluation, which came only hours after yet another emphatic denial of any such intention by M. Fourcade, which annoyed the French press, is thus for Giscard a very personal humiliation.

The President is not accustomed to this kind of failure, or this kind of press, especially from his supposed friends. Next year on 15 March he may well decide there's something to be said for staying in bed.

Allan Ashbolt

Whitlam Rides the Storm

It is ironical that the Australian Labour Party, which has consistently advocated the unambiguous identification and full public disclosure of all election campaign donations, should suddenly find itself embroiled in a major scandal over the quest for funds. Whether this proposed gift, assumed by at least one of the three ALP negotiators to be 500,000 US dollars, was to have come from the Iraqi Government as such, or from the Ba'ath Socialist Party (which might reasonably be regarded as possessing quasi-fraternal status), or merely from what the ALP national executive calls 'Arab sources', is not yet by any means clear.

The main contact point for the ALP appears to have been Bill Hartley, long-time executive member, staunch pro-Palestinian, spokesman for the socialist Left in Victoria, and one of the few genuine ideologists and theoreticians active on the Australian political scene. He suggested to the national secretary, David Combe, that enough cash to meet the party's mounting debt in the electoral circumstances of last November and December might be forthcoming from 'Arab sources', no strings attached. The possibility was mentioned to Whitlam, who approved of any discussions directed to this end. Whitlam also found the time to take a half-hour breakfast with two visiting Iraqi officials on 10 December at the Sydney apartment of the chosen (or self-appointed?) intermediary, Mr Henry Fischer. And it is here that the story develops eerie overtones.

Mr Fischer first oozed his way into notoriety as an exponent of primeval politics. In the mid-1960s he belonged to a cabal of frenetic racists concerned with safeguarding the values of Aryan civilisation against the inroads of blacks, Jews and communists. He also edited a news magazine which interpreted the world in terms of the need to preserve white capitalist Christianity (or white Christian capitalism, or capitalism with a white Christian face) in all its present strongholds. He zealously supported the American war in Vietnam. He was not simply anti-Zionist, but saw the Arabs as an instrument destined to strike down the Jewish people in general and the Israelis in particular. He would not have pretended any sympathy with Arab socialism. How then did the politically principled and intellectually astute Bill Hartley get sucked in by him? Why did Whitlam agree to him as a link-man? Where was Combe's strategic foresight? It is true that for several years now Fischer has been employed as some kind of representative by a respectable Sydney millionaire with Lebanese connections and extensive trading interests in Arab countries. Fischer's political record, however, should have made Whitlam, Hartley and Combe extremely wary of dealing with and through him.

The trouble was that these three party officers kept the arrangement to themselves, in part doubtless because Bob Hawke, the party president, is as pro-Israeli as Hartley is pro-Palestinian and would have fought to have any Iraqi offer rejected. As it was, the money never arrived – thus indicating that 'Arab sources' either concluded that nothing was to be gained from sending it after Labour lost the election or else (and this seems more likely) had become very suspicious indeed of Mr Fischer. Maybe those 'Arab sources' had not even heard of any plan to bail the ALP out of its financial crisis. Yet even on 11 February, when Whitlam and Combe applied to the Commonwealth Bank for an overdraft to enable them to pay $180,000 to the party's advertising agency, they still entertained high expectations of receiving the Arab money. At this stage the situation with the bank was so grim that the matter could no longer be held back from consideration by the national executive, which met at Hawke's home on 15 February and voted to turn down any offer that might emerge from Iraq.

The story was bound to leak, of course, but might have been treated as just another folly-cum-failure in the hazards of fund-raising if Mr Fischer had not decided to present his own rather lurid version to Mr Rupert Murdoch – who took over the front page of the *Australian* and, with frenzied war-whoops, lunged for Whitlam's jugular. But then, as editorials clamoured for the ex-PM's resignation, as commentators predicted his imminent political demise, as the Government behaved with that unctuous hypocrisy which has already become its definitive characteristic, as the phrase 'Arab money' got encrusted with vicious racist connotations, as the Attorney-General vaguely threatened prosecutions, as the PM demanded reports from the security police protecting Whitlam on 10 December, as the entire pre-set machinery of Establishment outrage lumbered into hysterical action, a strange thing happened.

Despite many misgivings over Whitlam's autocratic style of command, the Left wing of the parliamentary party, under Tom Uren, moved fairly solidly behind him. Branches throughout the nation rallied to him. Certainly the national executive, after meeting for two and a half days, condemned him (along with Hartley and Combe) 'in the strongest terms', but there has been no large-scale attempt to eject him from the leadership.

One of the most commonsensical vindications of Whitlam came, oddly enough, from a former secretary of the Liberal Party in Victoria. While uttering mandatory noises about how the Liberals would be unlikely to accept a donation from Iraq, he went on: 'Generally I can see no difference between an Arab country financially assisting the Labour Party and a foreign-owned company making a substantial donation to the Liberals or the Country Party. This Iraqi thing has only brought to a head a situation that has been developing for some time. It has given a number of politicians a jolt and quite a few in all three major parties must now be looking at Gough and saying: "There but for the grace of God go I."'

But the present fracas is significant not only because it illuminates the difficulties of campaign funding or the complexities of Whitlam's personality. It also reflects a continuing ideological dispute in the ALP over the Arab-Israeli question and perhaps foreshadows a deepening struggle during the next few years. While he was PM, Whitlam pursued a policy that has been variously described as even-handed, non-aligned and uncommitted. That he leaned towards closer ties with Arab countries is, however, obvious from his willing involvement in the Iraqi affair. For it would be naïve to argue that a gift of 500,000 US dollars would not have imposed some form of diplomatic obligation on a Labour Administration. Whitlam's attitude in government was nearly all *real-politik*, with scarcely a smattering of ideology, and shaped with the intention both of expanding Australia's relationships in an area of growing economic importance and of placating predominant tendencies inside the ALP. Any future leader will have to do the same and it is a measure of Bob Hawke's integrity that he persists in speaking uncompromisingly for Israel when he must know that the pro-Palestinian (not necessarily pro-Arab in the broad sense) groundswell among the left of the ALP, especially the younger Left, puts whatever bids he might eventually make for the top job in jeopardy.

Sydney

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SAVE IT

BRITISH GAS

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John Griffith

Workers, Shareholders and Boards

Writing about industrial democracy is a very slippery business. Take the vocabulary: collective bargaining, worker participation, co-ownership, co-partnership, co-determination, negotiation, consultation (always called joint), workers' control, worker representation, worker directors, workers' directors, works councils, profit-sharing. As to semantics: I could make out a very strong case for saying not only that none of those words or phrases is a synonym for any other of them, but that each is used, and commonly used, to convey more than one meaning.

Whatever it is, everyone is in favour of it. Like the Ombudsman, like the Bill of Rights, like (until recently) devolution, you must swear by or affirm to it when challenged. 'I point out,' said Mr Peter Shore on 5 August 1975 when replying to a discussion following his announcement of the setting up of a committee of inquiry into industrial democracy, 'that I have seldom launched a statement which has received such unanimous and all-party support in the House.' Responding to Mr Shore, Mr Cyril Smith asked if the minister was aware that the Liberal Party had been committed to 'the principle of worker participation' (not that Mr Shore had used that phrase) since 1928. Mr Eric Heffer wanted to know if his right honourable friend was aware that long before the Liberal Party was involved in 'industrial democracy' (not that Mr Smith had used that phrase) many in the Labour Party had been arguing for 'self-management for workers in industry' (not that anyone had used that phrase).

Way back in October 1974, the Labour Party manifesto had promised the introduction of 'new legislation to help forward our plans for a radical extension of industrial democracy in both the private and public sectors'. But it took until 5 August 1975 for the Government even to announce the setting-up of a committee of inquiry – and until 3 December 1975 for its members to be named. The committee, under the chairmanship of Lord Bullock, has on it three trade unionists, Mr Jack Jones, Mr Clive Jenkins and Mr David Lea; three industrialists, Sir Jack Callard (former chairman of ICI), Mr B. Heath (chairman of GKN), and Mr N. P. Biggs (chairman of Williams and Glyn's Bank); Professors K. W. Wedderburn and G. Bain; Mr J. Methven (the director-general of Fair Trading and now director-general-designate of the CBI) and Mr N. S. Wilson (a partner in Slaughter & May, solicitors). Its terms of reference are:

> Accepting the need for a radical extension of industrial democracy in the control of companies by means of representation on boards of directors and accepting the essential role of trade union organisations in this process, to consider how such an extension can best be achieved, taking into account in particular the proposals of the Trade Union Congress report on industrial democracy as well as experience in Britain, the EEC and other countries. Having regard to the interests of the national economy, employees, investors and consumers, to analyse the implications of such representation for the efficient management of companies and for company law.

These terms of reference are highly tendentious, though not necessarily the worse for that. They exclude the nationalised industries, which are being separately looked at. I am not sure that the Opposition and those they represent were all aware that they had accepted the need for a *radical* extension of industrial democracy, though they may be able to weaken the force of that adjective by a modest interpretation of industrial democracy itself. But the terms do require the committee to direct their attention specifically to trade union representation on boards.

The attitude of Conservatives and businessmen to the considerable range of proposals associated with industrial democracy has inevitably been various and variable. In July 1974 the Bank of England set up the City Company Law Committee under the chairmanship of Sir Henry Fisher. In February 1975 the Committee, in response to earlier TUC and Labour Party publications, reported on 'employee participation', which it looked at primarily to see to what extent such participation would contribute to the existence of an efficient and profitable private sector. It is widely believed, said the committee,

> that the increased size of companies and of units of production, and the increased mechanisation and complication of industrial processes, have caused employees to feel 'alienated' and powerless in the face of remote management decisions of which they have no fore-knowledge and over which they have no control.

The quotation marks around alienated suggest that the idea was relatively new to the members of the committee. Employee participation, in their view, should be examined carefully and sympathetically because it might improve industrial relations, but the committee opposed a change in the law as being prejudicial to the national interest.

The principal objection raised by the City committee was that employee directors might not be able to act 'on behalf of and in the interests of the company':

> An employee director would on occasion be called on to take part in decisions which, though in the long-term interests of the company, might be unpopular with some of his fellow employees or contrary to the policy of his union.

The committee saw other sources of conflict from such worker directorships, in relation to shareholders and investors.

It is difficult to know how to judge such reports. At one level they seem to be unbelievably simple-minded, which the members of the City committee certainly were not. While it is true, as the Tory MP Mr Norman Tebbit once said, that Sir Henry Fisher 'is not generally regarded as a left-wing lunatic', he is hardly a stuffed City gentleman either. Nevertheless to issue a report which did no more than explain why worker directors would be either anomalous under the existing law, or undesirable under the existing practice, can hardly help seeming a meaningless exercise.

Not that the reservations are all on one side. During the preliminary debates Mr Albert Booth, the Minister of State, said:

> When one has lived with a 'we-they' relationship for many generations, it is not surprising that one wants to think very carefully before doing something which changes that relationship. A number of trade unionists with whom I have talked are seriously of the opinion that the day they move to this – and they think the day is coming – they will have totally to reconsider the trade in which their unions work.

But his reservation was registered over the possibility of trade unions having a 50-50 representation on boards. If that happened, then the we – they distinction might well undergo a change, quite possibly becoming accentuated rather than diminished.

On what kind of boards, then, would it be feasible or desirable, from the workers' point of view, to have a large proportion of representation? The fashionable idea is the two-tier board, with workers on the supervisory tier with a managing board below. The TUC argument goes like this. First, 'the whole concept of a greater degree of industrial democracy is the achievement by work-people collectively of a greater control over their work situation'. The strengthening of trade union organisation and the widening of the scope of collective bargaining is put firmly in the front line by the TUC. It is, of course, argued, especially by the Liberal Party, but not only by them, that it is neither necessary nor desirable that the constituency for the election of worker directors should be the trade unions. Rather it should be the whole work-force. Again, perhaps the TUC want to ensure that the arguments about worker directors are not allowed to divert attention from the need to extend the subject matter of collective bargaining into 'recruitment, training, deployment, manning and speed of work. work-sharing, discipline, redundancy and dismissals' and so forth.

Nevertheless, this leads to 'a wide range of fundamental managerial decisions' beyond the scope of collective bargaining as we now know it. These include major decisions on investment, location, closures, takeovers and mergers. So the TUC turns to supervisory boards, one half of each such board being appointed by workers through their trade unions. The supervisory board would be responsible for determining company objectives, the policies necessary for their achievement, and for monitoring and reporting progress back to the workers. The management board would be appointed by the supervisory board and would be responsible for the day-to-day running of the company.

The supervisory board is not universally loved by the workers where, in various forms, it has been operated on the Continent. More important perhaps is the old

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DO YOU KNOW WHAT INDEPENDENCE IN MEDICINE IS REALLY ALL ABOUT?

	TRUE	FALSE
1. More than 8 people out of every 10 (82%) believe in the right to pay for private medicine?	☐	☐
2. On average, a part-time Consultant works practically the same hours for the National Health Service as a full-time Consultant does?	☐	☐
3. Pay beds in NHS hospitals will contribute £40 million annually to the financially-stretched National Health Service?	☐	☐
4. Despite the grave concern of the Medical Profession, the Government intends to introduce legislation on private medicine in advance of the findings of the Royal Commission on Health?	☐	☐

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Mrs. Castle's Department has said "It is not possible to confirm that waiting time for a consultation will be reduced and the waiting time for admission will shorten when pay beds are phased out . . ."

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A doctor's loyalty is to his patients. That's why the Medical Profession has always shown itself to be completely opposed to any political suggestion that the patient's freedom of choice should be tampered with. Such suggestions are rife today. The issue at stake is not just one of professional freedom but also of patient freedom.

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question of where effective power lies and to what extent those with nominal control can exercise it. Thus effective power may lie with senior executives rather than with the managing board, and so, for the large companies, that board itself has supervisory, not managerial functions. The parallel with the relationships between ministers and civil servants may be apt – for the strength of the civil service lies finally in its power to control the sources of information and to exclude ministers from them.

It is clearer to distinguish (a) 'policy' boards, which may be supervisory boards or, in big companies, managing boards, and (b) the body which exercises executive managerial responsibility. The TUC does not wish to have membership of the latter because of the conflict of interest. This is the contemporary example of one of the oldest of trade union positions, but also, for the future, of trade union dilemmas. The argument was joined many years ago when the shape of nationalised industries was being debated within the trade union movement and the Labour Party. It is not an argument that will go away, for it concerns the historic functions of trade unions, their ideology, and the basic question of whether in any present or any future structure of capitalist society the 'interests of the workers' are reconcilable with the 'interests of the company'. For the moment at least, the TUC shows itself as primarily concerned with strengthening the processes of collective bargaining. The growth of 'industrial democracy' helps that strengthening. Possibly it may lead to other things but, so the TUC seems to be saying, one thing at a time.

What is abundantly obvious is that no one central to the present debate is talking about workers' control. Nor does anyone seriously believe that the road can end with some version of Liberal co-partnership, with its overriding paternalism and its thesis that the interests of workers and owners are really one; and that only class prejudice blinds both sides to the acceptance of that simple truth. Nor is the debate about softer managerial control, dismissed by the TUC as the 'human relations' approach. Nor is it really believable that the City committee approach of not yet, maybe never, but let's keep talking, is anything other than tactical.

What should the TUC and the Labour Party be trying to do in this situation? For some, anything which is not directed towards the achievement of workers' control is a sell-out. But the road to workers' control lies along a narrow path – on one side of which lives the hungry dragon of integrationism and on the other the hungry dragon of collaborationism. Either is capable of eating the workers for breakfast unless they are very well armed. And the shareholders do have great power on paper so that, if they see workers gaining more influence than they like, they may emerge like some House of Lords backwoodsmen to protect their investment.

The real fight, then, is likely to come over the provisions of a new Companies Bill. The present powers of shareholders are so great – however infrequently used – that the position of workers, even on unitary, and much more on supervisory, boards, would be hopelessly weak. So the law would need to be changed to strengthen that position and, necessarily, to weaken the shareholders'. That fight will make the Industrial Relations Act affair look like a friendly difference of opinion.

The terms of the conflict began to emerge last week with the CBI rejecting worker directors, defining 'participation' so as to exclude 'interference with the executive function of management', and accusing the TUC of wanting trade union control of companies. Meanwhile news of these matters has reached even *The Times* where, quick as a flash, Ronald Butt drew attention on 11 March to 'what is now called "industrial democracy" ' (his quotation marks). Enter, no doubt, Mr Levin, pursued by a cart-horse.

It is not easy to see worker directors as a threat to the stability of private capitalism but if the CBI truly believes they would be troublesome, then for the Labour movement not to support the policy of the TUC would, in this imperfect world, be an act of folly.

Robert Fisk

The Murder of Sammy Smyth

Four days before he was murdered, Sammy Smyth announced, with a slight air of self-importance, that he might be killed before the week was out. He was standing in the Heathrow departure lounge, waiting for the Belfast flight, when I caught sight of him, the same squat, bullet-like figure with its square head and salt-and-pepper hair that had graced a dozen UDA press conferences. 'What're you doing?' he asked with that half-suspicious smile that para-militaries adopt when they come across someone they know, far from home. I told him I was going to Belfast for the weekend and suggested he must have been abroad on some UDA business. 'Ah, not at all,' he said quickly: he had forgotten the pile of duty-free tobacco piled on his hand-trolley.

Sammy Smyth was the kind of man who would evince quite genuine amazement when someone doubted his word; for he was until he died a man known for the chilling confession and the apparently outright threat. He helped to found the Protestant vigilante groups in the Cregagh estate in East Belfast in 1971 – they were the embryo Ulster Defence Association although few knew it then– and might have stayed on as leader if the first UDA chairman had not taken a dislike to the independence of his views and sent two toughs round to his home to beat him insensible on the front-door mat. Smyth's reply was the publication of a badly-typed broadsheet called *The Ulster Militant* which made it clear that killing was in some circumstances an acceptable way of relieving feeling and clearing political paths; true to the spirit of the times, Smyth cyclostyled across the front page of every issue a drawing of a massive clenched fist.

The UDA used Smyth. They supported a community association he helped to run in the Shankill because it helped to provide a non-sectarian front for the para-militaries – Smyth, in his way was interested in the prospects of conciliation – while allowing him to act as press spokesman when it suited them. During the Ulster Workers' strike in May 1974 the UWC appointed Smyth Minister of Propaganda, a role upon which he bestowed some immortality by constantly telling journalists that he hoped for a bloody civil war to solve Northern Ireland's problems.

Even the UDA leaders – particularly Andy Tyrie, the chairman – became embarrassed, however, by the openness of Smyth's rhetoric. When told of the Dublin bombings in 1974 in which 28 men and women died, he said he was happy. 'There is a war with the Free State and we are laughing at them,' he said. Smyth recovered after a few months to resume his role of self-styled intellectual, issuing statements for the UDA, protesting about a planned urban ring motorway and suggesting (most recently) that he felt like burning down Catholic chapels when he heard David O'Connell, the IRA chief of staff, talking on television. Sammy Smyth came to be thought of by journalists and para-militaries alike as more than a little unbalanced.

That is why Smyth probably expected no reaction from me when he leaned across his luggage trolley at Heathrow and said: 'You'll read something of interest in the *Sunday News* tomorrow.' He paused, apparently for effect, before saying: 'I may not be alive this time next week.'

Smyth's article in the *Sunday News*, Belfast's florid but non-sectarian Sunday paper, duly appeared next day. It was a long but by no means rambling appeal to the UDA to talk to the Provisionals now that the Northern Ireland Convention had folded. It recognised that political power lay more than ever with the men who have guns.

To some extent this has always been the case in Northern Ireland (the six-county province of Ulster was built on such a concept after the 1912 resistance to the Home Rule Bill) yet never before has the strength of the para-militaries seemed so relevant. And never before has it seemed, to so many people around Belfast, so acceptable. The Smyth theory of violence to open new political options seems so easy that even moderate men can wonder about the possibilities of suitable assassination. 'It's a wonder,' the taximan said at the airport in Belfast, 'that no one's shot Paisley yet.' Then in all seriousness, he added: 'That would certainly ease the situation.'

Neither the police nor the army in Northern Ireland are under any illusions about this freedom to 'ease the situation' and about the armed political intentions of the private armies. Although the Royal Ulster Constabulary will not admit the figure, even

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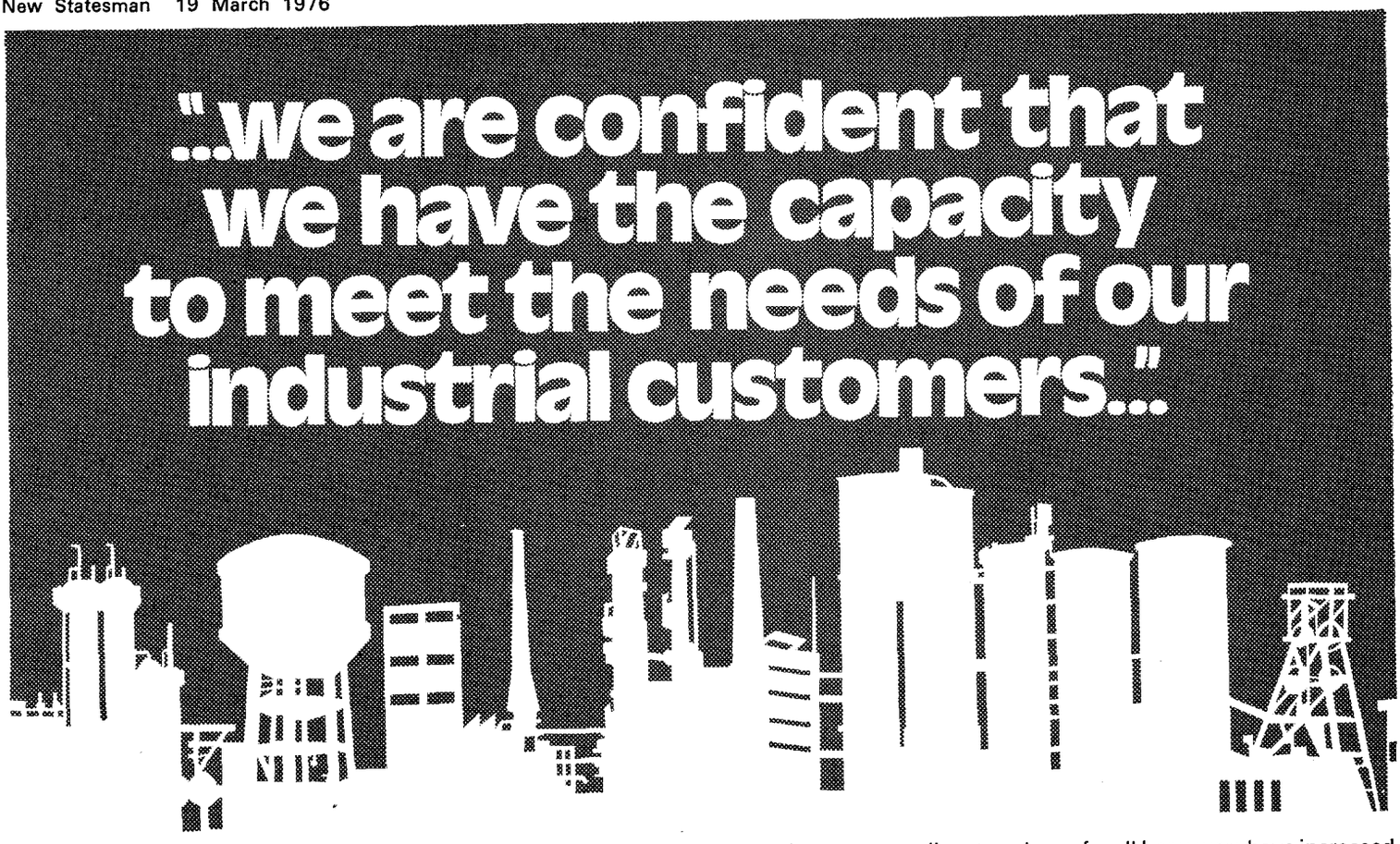

Extracts from the Statement of The Right Hon. Lord Armstrong of Sanderstead, PC, GCB, MVO, Chairman of Midland Bank Limited.

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If you would like a copy of Lord Armstrong's full Statement and the Report for 1975, please write to: The Secretary, Midland Bank Limited, Head Office, 27 Poultry, London EC2P 2BX. The Annual General Meeting will be held at The Chartered Insurance Institute, 20 Aldermanbury, London, EC2 on 7 April at 11 a.m.

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privately, it is a fact that over one third of the RUC's entire complement of 4,800 policemen and policewomen are now employed at any one time guarding the province's politicians, judges and civil servants from assassination. The army have remarkably accurate figures for the weapons now held by Protestant groups and the details of their training; yet for so long have they been forced, through political circumstances, to accept para-militarism that their files are almost matter-of-fact.

Take, for example, the army's private report on Tara, a Protestant organisation founded in 1973 which is well-armed but has links with a Northern Ireland political party and is perfectly legal. The army's account of their activities, collated by an intelligence officer at Lisburn, reads:

> Commanding Officer uses non-existent evangelical mission as a front . . . TARA organised initially in platoons of 20 now probably in companies and drawn almost exclusively from members of the Orange Order; each platoon has a Sgt/QM [Quartermaster], and IO [Intelligence Officer]: contributions – 50p per man per month – half to a central fund, half kept at ptn [platoon] level; ptns were able to draw on central fund if opportunity to buy stores arose; meetings held in Clifton Street Orange Hall about every two weeks under name of Orange Discussion Group; training in radio, weapons and lectures in guerrilla tactics.

Political assassination in Northern Ireland, once a horror made substantial only by the attacks on John Taylor when he was Home Affairs Minister in 1971 and on Senator Barnhill, is now a nightmare which every public figure in the province has to live with. Gerry Fitt's election agent was stabbed to death in 1973, John Hume's life has been threatened. Ivan Cooper of the SDLP has twice escaped car-bomb attacks, Austin Currie's home in County Tyrone has been raked by machine-gun fire on countless occasions. Earlier this year, the Provisionals tried to burn down Fitt's home although the Loyalists have faced just the same, particularly the para-militaries Ernie Elliott and Tommy Herron of the UDA, and Jim Hannah of the UVF have all been murdered by their own people in the past four years: Harding Smith, the UDA chairman, cleared out of Ulster in 1975 after two attempts to kill him.

Sammy Smyth knew, therefore, that killing was an understandable form of doing business. He knew that some of the paramilitaries wanted him out of the way when his embarrassing article appeared. It had not been approved in advance by the UDA. And he was no stranger to assassination attempts; only last year two members of the Red Hand group tried, vainly, to kill off Smyth.

But on Wednesday night he thought himself safe in his daughter's home. And he nearly escaped again when the two gunmen – operating under orders from the UDA's Inner Council – called at the house in Alliance Avenue to deal with him. He managed to run away from them towards the back of the building but failed to get through the kitchen door. Then as he lay on the carpet, wounded in the legs, one of the gunmen shot him again. This time in the eye.

Belfast

Peter Wilby

Education's Castaways

'This report is about the education of English boys and girls aged from 15 to 18. Most of them are not being educated.' Thus began the report of the government-appointed Crowther Committee 17 years ago. With astonishing optimism, Crowther thought that this would be 'the next great battleground of English education'. The committee recommended one day's compulsory release per week for all young people in employment.

The failure to make day release compulsory – or even to extend it to the majority of employed teenagers – is arguably the greatest educational scandal of the century, a brutal illustration of our political priorities. The promise has been made and broken so often that new pledges excite about as much expectation as the Second Coming. There it was again in Labour's last election manifesto, the sort of thing that political parties throw into their programmes with the thoughtless abandon that advertising writers throw superlatives into their copy. Prodded by the TUC, Mr Fred Mulley, the Education Secretary, is convening a conference of interested parties in London next week in the hope of somehow rescuing the teenage work force from the political dustbin of the 20th century.

Compulsory day release was enshrined in legislation at the end of both world wars. The 1944 Education Act provided for the establishment of county colleges to give 'young persons who are not in full-time attendance such further education, including physical, practical and vocational training, as will enable them to develop their various aptitudes and capacities and will prepare them for the responsibilities of citizenship'. The County Colleges Order of 1947 made it the duty of every local authority to establish and maintain the colleges – but no date was specified. R. A. Butler exhorted industry to extend day release in 1949, saying: 'We cannot fail in this matter twice in 40 years . . . If we sit and let this matter drift no educational reformer in the country will be able to lift up his head in the future.'

In 1956 a government White Paper proposed a doubling of day release in five years. The actual increase was well under 50 per cent, in a period when the age group was expanding rapidly. In 1964 a Ministry of Education committee proposed an extra 250,000 day release places in the following five years. The report was shelved and the numbers dropped by over 20,000. In 1963 the Robbins Committee proposed an extra 100,000 places in full-time higher education.

That report was accepted, on the day of publication, in a statement from Downing Street. The target was comfortably exceeded, thus providing more educational resources for middle-class children on the ladder to professional success. Those affected by day release on the other hand are the working classes of yesterday, today and tomorrow.

The raising of the school-leaving age – enforced without considering the alternative of compulsory release for 15- to 18-year-olds – has led to an insignificant increase in the numbers of 16- and 17-year-olds released. Two in every five young people still have no further education of any sort after leaving school. The proportion of employed girls getting day release is under 10 per cent.

The education of young workers has been left to the hallowed British principle of voluntary effort backed by gentle persuasion. Industry's efforts have been inadequate in every sense. The public utilities, the building and engineering industries have good records but day release remains minimal in food, drink and tobacco, textiles, footwear, insurance and banking and, worst of all, the distributive trades, the biggest single employer of young people.

The present system is based on the 1964 and 1973 Industrial Training Acts, the first laws governing vocational training since the 1563 Statute of Artificers. Its fundamental weakness is that it divorces education and training, with the emphasis heavily on the latter, and serves employers' not young people's needs, nor, for that matter, national needs. As Crowther pointed out, those most in need of support in the critical years of late adolescence – the unskilled workers in dead-end jobs – are least likely to be granted day release. The courses that are supported are tied almost wholly to the acquisition of craft and technician skills, some of them so narrow that they could be obsolescent within a decade. (The sort of training that flourishes in the North may do no more than socialise young workers into declining industries.) Employers concerned with specific manpower needs are unlikely to encourage the students to take advantage of the flexibility of the technical colleges by trying out courses until they find the right ones for their own interests and abilities. One study of day release students suggested that more than a quarter of those on craft courses would have been successful on the higher-level technician courses. And, after four years, said the same study, nearly 40 per cent of the students have either withdrawn from their courses or repeatedly failed their exams.

The inevitable objections to proposals for broadening day release are that young workers will rebel against it unless it is 'useful', and that liberal studies in technical colleges are highly unpopular with day release students. True enough, and the aridity of curriculum thinking in this area is a measure of its neglect. Some surveys have found one third of day release students dismissing the existing courses as useless. Yet questionnaires to school-leavers – including one administered recently on the

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Government's behalf – frequently elicit the expression of a tentative wish to carry on with education in some way.

There is no reason to believe that day release would be greeted with mass rebellion if the students could do what *they* wanted rather than what their employers wanted. In a paper delivered to the Government last year, the TUC identified 'aspects of personal development to be explored, out-of-work interests to be reinforced, inadequacies in basic skills to be remedied, social relationships to be considered, problems of working life to be examined, adult knowledge to be sought in many and various directions, imagination, self-awareness and independent judgment to be fostered'.

Before we sniff at such quaint liberal objectives, we should ask ourselves whether we are serious about worker participation in management and about social mobility and whether we really believe that stiffer prison sentences and the birch are the only answers to football hooliganism. One activity listed by Crowther but omitted by the TUC is physical education. It would do no harm at all if the students were given a field to kick a football around for an afternoon, if that's what they wanted to do. To suggest that nothing could be provided of any interest at all is merely to accept the elitist 19th-century view that the lower classes are genetically ineducable.

If compulsory day release is to be a success, colleges must provide the widest possible variety of courses and activities from which young workers can choose. (Day release, of course, doesn't have to be literally a day a week. It can be a seven-week block course or a series of residential weekends.) That cannot happen overnight and the TUC is pressing for the establishment of a national agency to develop the right courses over the next few years.

When its work is completed a date should be set for the introduction of compulsory day release. The TUC properly rejects the idea, even as an interim stage, of granting young people the *right* to day release – in an increasingly tight labour market there is a premium on not exercising your rights. Many employers would make vacuous promises about granting day release 'when we can spare you'. As far as industry is concerned it can never spare day release for most of its young employees: when the order books are full, the workers can't be spared; when business is slack, the money can't be spared. It is just another aspect of British industry's notorious reluctance to invest. After 60 years of hollow promises, it is time that the young worker – even at cost to other sections of the education budget – was granted a fair deal.

Donald Gould

Miracle Cures?

The Blessed John Ogilvie, who was hanged in 1615, has been given an essential boost on his long road to sainthood by the Vatican's decision, announced last week, that he was responsible for the miraculous recovery, nine years ago, of John Fagan, a Glasgow docker. Fagan's survival certainly smacks of the miraculous. In 1967 he was dying from stomach cancer. Surgery had apparently failed him. One day his GP is said to have told Mrs Fagan that her husban could not survive the weekend. On the Monday the doctor was amazed to find his patient not only still alive, but sitting up in bed eating an egg. According to the evidence, now accepted by Rome, Mr Fagan developed 'a dramatic, abrupt, and uninterrupted improvement with return to full health'. The Blessed John Ogilvie has been given the credit for this happening because Mrs Fagan had given her sick husband an Ogilvie medallion, and because his fellow Catholic parishioners had prayed for the martyr to intercede on Fagan's behalf before God.

Do the facts warrant the invocation of a miracle as the only possible explanation for John Fagan's unexpected escape from death? Unlike the many private practitioners of faith healing, and spirit healing, and the many other forms of unorthodox therapy for which exceptional results are claimed, the Church of Rome applies stern tests before accepting any cure as miraculous. There has to be good and sufficient evidence that the person concerned was indeed suffering from a specific illness producing some observable abnormality in the body (proved by such means as X-ray pictures, chemical test, physical examination, and so on) before the claimed cure took place. It has then to be shown that the main signs and symptoms of the patient's malady disappeared within hours of the supposed divine intervention. The original improvement must thereafter have been maintained for several years. Moreover there must be no likelihood that the change could have been brought about by any physical treatment the patient may have been receiving at the time. In short, the subject of a supposed miraculous cure must have made a recovery judged inexplicable in medical terms.

John Fagan's case seems, on the face of it, to fulfil all these criteria, and since the Church will have had all the medical facts carefully assessed by experienced doctors, including cancer specialists, it might appear that his story constitutes *prima facie* evidence for the belief that God does sometimes suspend the laws of nature in answer to prayer. But there are peculiar difficulties bedevilling any attempts to prove that some particular procedure or drug or circumstance has indeed influenced the course of a disease.

Many illnesses are self-limiting, and disappear when they have run their course. Others produce symptoms which wax and wane, so that the victim of a duodenal ulcer, for example, may be in pain and misery one week, but feeling fit and well the next. Any kind of therapy, whether it be a modern drug or the incantation of a charm which happens to be in use when such a spontaneous remission or recovery occurs is likely to get the credit for the 'cure'.

A good many sicknesses reside solely in the mind, and a neurotic person can suffer all manner of unpleasant symptoms such as prostrating headaches or frightening palpitations when there is, in fact, nothing whatever wrong with any of the body's working parts. Such people are often highly suggestible, and their symptoms can often be dramatically relieved by hypnosis, or any of a wide variety of other circumstances which have the effect of persuading them that they might as well get better.

More rarely, purely psychological factors can produce much grosser disabilities, such as blindness, or paralysis, or deafness. A 'hysterical' paralysis of the legs was not uncommon during World War I among soldiers who became unable to face the repeated and senseless horror of 'going over the top'. Such a hysterical suspension of a major physical function has no relationship whatever to malingering. The hysteric is convinced of the reality of the physical fault which his subconscious mind has invented. Somebody suffering hysterical blindness, for example, will walk over a cliff to destruction rather than acknowledge to his conscious mind that his ability to see is unimpaired. But an appropriate physical or psychological stimulus can break the mental block. This is the basis of the recurring newspaper stories of the deaf or blind or paralysed who have suddenly recovered a long-lost faculty following a terrifying thunderclap or the unexpected reappearance of a supposedly dead relative or friend. It is also the explanation for a proportion of apparently miraculous cures.

Finally patients occasionally recover from advanced and commonly mortal diseases for reasons we still don't fully understand, and this can happen with cancer. The body treats the abnormal cancer cells as 'foreign' and tends to reject them, just as it rejects a transplanted heart or kidney. We probably all develop tiny cancers all the time which are destroyed by the body's defence mechanisms before they can grow to a size at which they are apparent. 'Clinical' cancer occurs when the abnormal cells gain the upper hand. But very occasionally, even at this stage, something may happen to reverse the balance, and an established cancer disappears.

During the entire history of Lourdes only two cancer victims have been credited with miraculous cures. Chance alone could well account for those two happenings. Tens of thousands of prayers must be offered each day for the recovery of the mortally ill who die despite the supplications made on their behalf. We don't hear about the failures of prayer. But when somebody who is being prayed for does recover unexpectedly people start thinking in terms of miracles. The application of Occam's razor to the case of John Fagan must persuade us to assume that he is one of the few in whom advanced cancers disappear from natural causes, which you can, if you please, describe as the grace of God.

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London Diary

☐ Perhaps it is our conditioning to royal occasions – but we do not seem to be very good at rising to political events. In London on Tuesday only the weather, which started darkening right over and weeping buckets (cf. *Julius Caesar*) the moment the news broke, seemed to be in a mood to pay any deference to the Prime Minister's announcement of his impending departure. For the rest only the word 'Official' on all the evening paper billboards seemed to succeed in persuading most people that it was not all some elaborate joke. At least, though, Mr Wilson did have the London newspapers – which is more than poor Churchill did in 1955. The Prime Minister also, of course, enjoyed himself to the full (complete with flame-thrower) on the telly: in fact he appeared to go through a positive marathon of appearances including one for his first political love, Australia. His actual press conference, or photo-call, in the Ministry of Defence was, however, something of a shambles. Like the old trouper he is, Harold Wilson was plainly put out by the absence of any 'roving mike': Jimmy Savile and David Frost are clearly better at organising these things than is the Downing Street press office. Not that the House of Commons shone by way of comparison either. It was in its most excitable, prep school, sniggering mood and its collective performance did nothing to add any dignity to the day. The radio, too, which only last July was ready to clear all decks for the Wilson/Healey announcement of the counter-inflation policy, proved on this occasion strangely sluggish in picking up the story. On the BBC at least they were still prattling merrily on with *You and Yours* and *Dad's Army* when it might have been assumed that anyone tuning in would rather like to have been told what was going on. Did no one, then, emerge with any credit? Only, I'd have said, the Palace. Given the news *it* had to impart, its sense of timing struck me, if anything, as even better than the Prime Minister's.

☐ Why is it that political leaders when they come to announce their retirements are always so anxious to let us know that in fact they made up their minds long, long ago? Listening to the Prime Minister going on about how he'd always meant to stay only two years after the 1974 election, how it had originally been his intention to go last September, how he had told the deputy Speaker last autumn and the Queen last December, I was reminded of the rather similar rigmarole that Lyndon Johnson went through eight years ago this month. LBJ even had some elaborate tale about how his wife had stuffed the text of the announcement he was originally planning to make in his 1968 State of the Union message into her handbag on the way to the Capitol – thereby preventing him from saying what he wanted to at the time he had first scheduled. I do not, of course, disbelieve a word the Prime Minister said (though LBJ is perhaps a different story): it just strikes me as passing strange that he should have found it necessary to go to such lengths in order to justify what no one would bother to dispute was plainly a wholly voluntary decision.

☐ One habit the Prime Minister has certainly kept up to the end is that of seeing to it that his PPSs always get office. By my count the present occupant, John Tomlinson, has been in the job only 14 weeks: never mind, he's been found a safe berth as an under-secretary at the Foreign Office. Could there, I wonder, be a tiny clue in that? Jim Callaghan, after all, is one of only two members of the present cabinet – the other is Roy Jenkins – who have always insisted on exercising an unfettered right of choice (and, if necessary, of veto) over the ministers they have in their departments. And it is frankly inconceivable that Harold Wilson would have added to the FO's ministerial strength without getting the prior blessing of the Foreign Secretary. I draw no conclusion – except perhaps that one good turn . . .

☐ Talking of which, Jim Callaghan certainly did himself one five or six years ago when he resisted all blandishments to go out after the deputy leader's job, first in succession to George Brown and then as an 'anti-Market loyalist' contender against Roy Jenkins. I remember how his reluctance to run puzzled and irritated Dick Crossman at the time – as well as perplexing some of his own closest supporters. There used, however, to be a phrase of Rab Butler's about 'the patience of politics'. If anyone has displayed it recently in the Labour Party, it is surely Jim Callaghan, by sticking to the party treasurership and patiently waiting for the big prize (when all the odds must have looked against it ever happening) to come along. The fact that Callaghan is still today the party treasurer – and thus spans the two wings of the movement in a way that no one else does – must be counted the corner-stone of his campaign.

☐ One of our embarrassments this week is that, having published Peter Jenkins's exhaustive assessment of the Prime Minister at 60 in last week's issue, we really cannot survey his life and times again (in any case there is already far too much premature obituarising going on for my money). Jenkins's piece was in fact singled out for praise by Wilson himself in his BBC TV interview – and, of course, if only he'd stuck to his original plan to announce his retirement on his actual birthday we would have had something approaching a psychic 'scoop' on our hands. At least, however, we fared better than poor Marje Proops in the *Mirror* last Thursday. Her 'Wherefore Art Thou, Romeo?' piece should from now only rank as a *locus classicus* of how politicians will, when it suits them, pull wool over the eyes of even their most devoted journalistic admirers. Skilfully it was left to Proops herself to announce that 'Harold Wilson appears to have no secret, wistful longing to be a private man, to get away from it all', and further to record that the Prime Minister 'got a bit cross' when she asked: 'At 60, which is a watershed age for most men, don't you think about putting your feet up?' At least, however, the fact that the article appeared last Thursday disposes of the theory that it was Wilson's defeat in the Commons last week, rather than the two impending by-elections, which brought about the postponement of his resignation statement. Not even a Prime Minister who has always loved hoodwinking the press would surely have left Marje Proops (of all people) with egg all over her face on the very day that he planned to make the announcement.

☐ Incidentally, on Wilson and the press, I have a suggestion to make that I hope will chime in with the general prevailing mood of 'forgive and forget'. In other countries when rulers change it is by no means unknown for amnesties to be offered. Would it not make an appropriate, magnanimous gesture if the Prime Minister *and* his minions were now to announce that they were withdrawing all outstanding writs and legal proceedings against newspapers, reporters and columnists – including the one (Nigel Dempster of the *Daily Mail*) who had the temerity to hint last December that the Prime Minister was getting 'tired' of the job he is now about to relinquish?

☐ News from the course – or at least from the tote. One prominent Labour peer has, I learn, already written his letter of resignation in the event of Jim Callaghan eventually getting his nose past the post. If I were to reveal his identity, you might understand why not only my treasure but my heart is also now on a Callaghan victory.

Crucifer

This England

Prizes: £1.50 book token for first entry, £1 tokens for others printed. Paste entries on a postcard.

☐ Housewife Mrs Jeanette Charles, who is the Queen's 'double,' has been refused membership of Equity, the actors' union. A union spokesman said looking like the Queen was not considered to be a professional accomplishment. – *Guardian* (J. R. Soames)

☐ Another witness, Miss 111, dressed in brown slacks, white fur top, and a brown fur hat, said she had complained about one client she was sent to – a scruffy, drunken Irishman. She said she could not be expected to go to the Savoy Hotel one moment and a Wimpy bar the next. – *Daily Telegraph* (G. M. Moger)

☐ The local council at Barnsley, South Yorkshire, has had to abandon a civil defence command post designed to survive a nuclear war because it has been wrecked by vandals. – *Daily Telegraph* (W. Pugh)

☐ Radio Tees, assuming difficulty with the spelling of the duo's surname, gave long-playing record prizes to listeners who could spell The Everly Brothers. They hadn't counted on the entrants who couldn't spell brothers – *Northern Echo* (Leo Frain)

☐ 'If there were any question of unpleasantness,' said his lordship, 'one would of course prefer to employ an agent to deal with it. One would not want to shout at anyone oneself.' – *Observer* (T. E. Easterfield)

☐ The Angolan mercenary who helped hide the bodies of the men massacred by Colonel Callan is in Crouch End looking for work. He'd like to get back to his old job – as a social worker looking after ex-convicts and alcoholics. – *Hornsey Journal* (A. B. Knight)

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Anne Bennett

What Hath Night To Do with Sleep?

'This lady's depressed because she had hip trouble and can't lie on her back, so she doesn't have intercourse with her husband. What's the solution?' asked Dr Gray. 'They change places,' I said. 'Reasonable,' said he, 'except that of all the men she could have married she chose one who's developed disc trouble and *he* can't lie on his back either'. At which point I left the discussion.

I was on emergency night duty (which I don't love but get £15 for a weekend so can't complain). In fact I remember once telling Colin that being unable to relax because the bleep might go is not the same thing as having a headache. 'No,' he said 'but the result is' and then the bleep *did* go and it was a police inspector rattling on something about incest. It sounded complicated. So thought I'd better go, and turned out into chilly provincial England down the motorway – miles and miles of road, hardly anyone about but me, like being a passenger on Concorde, and I reached the police station, all brightly lit and a lovely fug. The inspector said: 'It's the Lomaxes.'

Pat Lomax is 36, looks 25, face like Sophia Loren, eight children as feckless and bright as she is. Lomaxes of various ages and sexes were milling around the station and in particular there was 15-year-old Sue and her boy friend John, a lad of my acquaintance. 'And they are our problem,' said the inspector. 'We had a call – Sue missing from home, possibly with boy friend. We found her, brought them here. She said she left home because her Dad's been trying to have sex with her. Told her that was a serious allegation to make, he could go to prison. She would have to have a medical examination. 'That won't prove anything,' she said, 'because I've slept with John.' So I told her he could be charged because she is under age. Then she said it wasn't true about John but was true about Dad. 'We'll never make a case of it,' the inspector said, 'no witnesses, girl unreliable, wife will take husband's side. Meanwhile you might have to have all the little female Lomaxes in a place of safety as being at risk.' Damn and blast it, I thought – take four little kids from Mum to doubtful delights of children's home, that won't do.

I went in to Sue and John. 'I'll try a bit of blackmail on your Dad,' I said. 'Now, you want to stay with John, and your Dad insists you go home. I'll tell him that if he makes a fuss about it then the police will investigate the incest charge, but if he doesn't then he will only have to put up with me keeping an eye on the little ones, okay?' 'What about me?' said John, 'I *have* slept with Sue.' 'Yes, well, that has been formally notified to me,' I said 'and I'll have a little chat with both of you about sexual morals. But not tonight kids.'

'The little bitch,' her mother shrieked, on being told all this, 'he never touched her. Still, let her go with that lout, she's so lazy – never does a hand's turn for anyone. She'll be back before long.' 'I'll be seeing you then,' I said. 'Suppose so,' she said grudgingly, and gathered her brood up. They all went off in a police car and a calm settled on the station. 'About the other two,' the inspector said, 'I haven't got a car available. I suppose you couldn't . . .?' 'I'll take them,' I said.

'We're going to get married,' John confided in me confidently, 'when she's 16 next June.' They never will, of course, for as far as Sue is concerned John is someone to sharpen her teeth on, her first essay into the adult world of love and sex, the start of the bonus that her looks have given her. John just happened to catch her at the early stage and she will be the high point of his life. He'll never get such a beauty again. He's got nothing going for him really, but he has his visions has John. You can tell that by the way he looks at her. When she abandons him – well, he'll marry someone else. But it will be like Rupert Brooke says:

> And I shall find some girl, perhaps,
> And a better one than you
> With eyes as wise but kindlier
> And lips as soft but true
> And I daresay she will do.

'She *is* very young, John,' I said, 'don't you think?' Then Sue appeared and they sat in the back of the car. She practised her skills on him and I drove them home.

The roads were even quieter now – so quiet that I sailed past a red light and suddenly there was a police car. I think he thought I was drunk or had stolen the car. 'This is your car? What is the registration number?' he said smugly. 'RMO 652,' I said, equally smugly. He looked disappointed; how was he to know I'm a devotee of mnemonics? 'Look,' I said, 'it wasn't that I didn't notice the light was red, but there is no other traffic about for miles. *Please* don't charge me. I'm an ally of yours. Social services.' 'Well, all right,'he said, and we went our separate ways.

'Read the small print' Colin had said, and I did. 'Head Office Instructions for Bleep. Use of on emergency duty. Should the Duty Officer find herself in a difficult position, e.g. a delicate situation *vis-à-vis* another person, the importance of which she does not wish to have interrupted, the bleeper can be put on to memo alert, which will store the calls until such time as the receiver is switched back to the *ON* position.'

When I switched it back to *ON* position there was a call from a police sergeant in London, who had a mother and child shelterless and moneyless on his patch. 'They originate from your area,' he said. 'Sergeant,' I cooed, 'responsibility for action rests in the area where the need arises. Contact your local officer.' 'Can't raise anyone up here,' he said despondently. I took pity on him. 'I'll sanction any necessary payment. We'll argue about it later,' I said.

'Goodnight,' he finally said. 'The night's over,' I told him.

First Person

Arthur Marshall

Growing Pains

Life's Whirligig has brought me quite often into happy contact and friendship with the rich – the rich with ordinary names like you and me, and the rich whose names are redolent of wealth and brimful with solid, financial promise. I have found both sorts invariably kind and generous but I do not, I tell myself, envy them. They tend to arrange for themselves agitating lives, not helped by their inability to stay in the same place for very long. They suffer from a malaise which one might call Rich Fidgets. They have too much energy. The rest of us, exhausted from battling in and out of Sainsbury's, ask nothing better than to sit down quite quietly somewhere and stare at the wall.

And in addition to buzzing too vigorously about, the rich have another hobby of which they are probably unaware. I refer to Tumbril Talk, the uttering of sentences that will not be out of place as they rattle over the cobbles and the heads begin to roll. For example, I gave a rich friend a lift in my car. I was rather proud of it – a Ford Consul, Goodwood green and freshly washed. He looked, as he saw it, envious, and indeed he was. 'You're so *lucky* to have a cheap car. They never get stolen.' And there was Lady Juliet Duff, an exceptionally agreeable person and with access to great possessions, who was commiserating one day with a far from affluent friend who was hard up. 'Oh, but there's really no problem', she said, 'just sell *all* your Fabergé.'

Rich Fidgets can be productive of stressful atmospheres but I was no stranger to such things. I had grown up with them. My father, though a kindly disposed man, was one of those who can effortlessly create about them Pools of Unease. Experiencing, in public, a momentary *gêne*, a boredom, an anxiety, he was wishful to share the unwelcome feeling with those about him. The theatre, if the play was a dud, found him operating freely and the tools of his trade were ready to hand – clearings of the

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throat, yawns, deep sighs, hurried glances to right and left, shiftings and shufflings, windings of watches. The pool widened and widened.

In the enclosed space of a railway carriage compartment, my father was to be seen at his best. Expansive, he became. He enjoyed talking, and especially to unknowns. It was easy enough to set conversational balls in motion: 'Do you realise that we are now only eight miles from Slough?' or 'Which are your favourite pianola rolls?' Here, though there were no Pools of Unease, another hazard hovered – my father's confidence that he was a dab hand at spotting an accent, a confidence which, despite frequent huffy rebuffs, never weakened. 'Exactly which district of Newcastle do you come from?' 'But . . . I don't understand . . . *Newcastle*? I've never even been there.'

Once we nearly got into fisticuff trouble. It was 1940 and we were travelling to London. 'When were you last in Cork?' my father demanded of a rather sullen male fellow-passenger who had only with difficulty been nudged into chat ('What baccy's that you're smoking?'). It was wartime. Eire was neutral. The question carried a suggestion of something not quite right: of spying, perhaps, or some such underhand stuff. The man, who had, as he later revealed, spent his entire life in Ealing, became belligerent. Even my father was silenced.

But not all was unease and belligerence. One day he returned to our Sunday lunch in a state of great exaltation. It appeared that, returning from the garage along Castelnau, the wide road which joins Barnes to Hammersmith, he had seen, bowling sedately towards him, a large black car with no number plate. This could only mean one thing, royalty, and indeed within the car were to be seen King George V and Queen Mary, bound who knows whither. My father swept off his hat and bowed. The King and Queen politely inclined their heads. The car bowled on.

As we munched our lunch, my father mused awhile on what would have happened if, say, he had suddenly fainted dead away with excitement. Would the car have stopped? Would Queen Mary have pressed forward with smelling-salts? Would they have driven him home (all of 80 yards)? Would my mother have come rushing out, curtseying? I longed, irreverent as ever, to ask what would have happened if, more interestingly, my father's braces had suddenly burst and his trousers had fallen down to his ankles. Clapped in the Tower? Executed on the spot? Would Queen Mary have fainted? But I had learnt not to voice such thoughts.

I had not always been so careful. I had started reading at a relatively early age and all was grist to my mill. When we stayed with my Ilfracombe grandparents, acceptable (to me) reading matter was hard to come by. My grandfather was a devout clergyman and the books in his study tended to be collections of sermons (Canon Bellamy had been woefully prolific and a regular Rev. Gasbag of the pulpit) or were concerned with St Paul's interminable journeys, featuring far too few shipwrecks for one's youthful taste. Wandering into the kitchen one Sunday, I found, and made off with, the cook's newspaper and, settling down for a good read, found myself at once in the middle of a puzzlement.

A Judge, it seemed, had been extremely ratty with, and had given a five-year sentence to, some man who, in a public park, had 'exposed his person'. Now to me a person was somebody unknown ('Who's that person?'). Exposing I connected vaguely with photography – hypo baths and all that. *His* person implied somebody close to him: an aunt, perhaps. In those days, photography out of doors was unthinkable unless the sun was brightly shining. Five years in jug for coaxing an aunt outside on a balmy day? It didn't seem right, and in a gap in the conversation at tea I raised the subject. It took me some time to get my little message through and, when I did, it was not popular. My total innocence saved me but did not lessen the head-waggings and sorrowful looks. I was, needless to say, given no credit for having attempted to get justice, as I saw it, done.

Letters to the Editor

Scotland for Aye

Sir, Had Professor John P. Mackintosh MP, in his article of 5 March on the present devolution-cum-nationalist confusion in Scotland, listed the groups that matter as the Scottish Trades Union Congress and the Scottish National Party, I could have let the thing go; but the fact that he misses out the SNP and includes the Scottish Executive of the Labour Party and the Scottish Labour MPs provokes me – as Labour MP for Motherwell until October 1974 – into comment.

Whether we like it or not the SNP has been the catalyst. Its successes got both major UK parties on the run and resulted in both producing policies on devolution that have no genuine justification other than that of appeasement. That the Scottish TUC has also played a big part must be admitted. But to admit this is not to admit that the STUC represents the interests of trade unionists in Scotland better than the British TUC does or could. More than anything else the STUC owes its continued existence to the very considerable devolution that already operates in Scotland, and its advocacy of still further devolution need not be taken as unbiased evidence of what is best for the workers of Scotland.

But my present disagreement with John P. Mackintosh is with his rating of the Scottish Executive of the Labour Party and the Scottish Labour MPs. In my opinion very little account has been taken of either group. In March 1974, the newly elected Labour Government committed itself to a White Paper and a Bill on the Kilbrandon proposals. It did this in advance of any national conference decision of the Labour Party, and despite the fact that the Labour Party in Scotland, in a statement of evidence to the Royal Commission on the Constitution, had spelt out its complete opposition to any kind of all-Scotland elected Assembly.

A week or two after the Government's commitment on Kilbrandon, the Scots, at their annual conference in Ayr, renewed their opposition to an all-Scotland elected Assembly, and when the Government issued its Consultative Document on the Kilbrandon proposals in June it met rebuff from the Scottish Executive of the Labour Party on the grounds that they were 'opposed to any of the recommendations in the Consultative Document on devolution in the United Kingdom'.

But the pressures were on. Transport House had already moved in with the difficult-to-refuse request for a special Scottish recalled conference to reconsider the position on devolution. And, at their meeting in July, the National Executive of the Labour Party sought to put the matter beyond all doubt by adopting the motion: 'The National Executive Committee recognise the desire of the people of Scotland for the establishment of an elected Legislative Assembly within the context of the political and economic unity of the United Kingdom and call on the movement to declare their support in principle for such an Assembly, with a view to introducing legislation on the matter.'

Commenting on the adoption of this motion by the NEC, the *Glasgow Herald* of 24 July 1974 said: 'The motion was carried without debate as the last item on the NEC agenda. In a matter of minutes, and with barely a quorum present, the Labour Party executive declared its voice on an issue that had been undecided for years, and had split the party in Scotland.' The motion was in the name of Mr Alex Kitson, the Scottish assistant general secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union, and the *Glasgow Herald* went on to say: 'Neither Mr Wilson, the Prime Minister, nor his deputy, Mr Edward Short, who presides over the cabinet devolution committee, were present at the EC meeting.' The special reconvened Scottish conference was held in Glasgow in August 1974, when the considered advice of the Scottish Executive of the Labour Party was overwhelmed by the votes of UK-controlled trade unions and it was decided to call for the establishing of a Scottish Legislative Assembly.

The lot of the Scottish Labour MPs in all this has not been a happy one. The devolutionary die was cast without their Government ever consulting them; and, while Ted Short subsequently offered meetings, they knew his and the Government's mind was closed to any argument for the outright rejection of the intended Legislative Assembly. Professor John P. Mackintosh might consider this to have been an important role, but I for my part, thought we had been 'taken for a ride'.

GEORGE LAWSON

37 Burnblea Street
Hamilton
Lanarkshire

Sir, John P. Mackintosh (NS 5 March) is wrong. Those of us in the Scottish universities who remain opposed to university devolution – and we are a substantial majority of the teaching and research staff – are in no way motivated by fear of what a Scottish Ministry of Education would find out about 'what was going on in the universities'. The fears of many of us at least are of an altogether simpler nature, and Mr Mackintosh himself points to their source in the course of his article: we are afraid that the Scottish Assembly, to which in a devolved situation the universities would be subject, will be controlled either by the SNP or by other groups willing to dance to the Nationalists' tune.

On the universities issue, as on so many others, the Nationalists speak with more than one voice. But what we hear and read from SNP spokesmen and supporters is not reassur-

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ing. Apparently there are too many English students and too many English teachers at the Scottish universities. Apparently the Scottish universities need to be integrated more fully into the Scottish educational system. Apparently we do not teach enough Scottish history or Scottish literature or pay enough attention to Scottish issues or problems. All of these views most of us completely reject. The facts are that the Scottish universities are badly in need of more qualified applicants from whatever source; that their intellectual integrity and vitality depend on a free exchange of staff and students with other parts of the United Kingdom; and that Scottish history and literature, Scottish economic and social problems – whatever may have been true a generation or two ago – now receive perfectly adequate attention.

And what of the new administrative arrangements that a devolved situation would entail? These too make us apprehensive. To run the universities, the Scottish Assembly would almost inevitably turn to the Scottish Education Department, currently responsible for Scottish schools, colleges of education and colleges of further education. Mr Mackintosh writes of the danger that the Assembly might be tempted to build up the further-education colleges at the expense of the universities: the danger *we* fear is that the universities will come to be administered exactly as the colleges now are. What difference would it make? Ask any student who has experience of both!

The Government should not be misled by the sounds and fury emanating from bodies who have no real knowledge or understanding of the Scottish universities and their historic role. A narrow-minded parochialism is no part of the Scottish intellectual tradition. Mr Short should stand firm on the White Paper position maintaining the present arrangements for the Scottish universities in a United Kingdom context. He can do so in the knowledge that he has the support of the great majority of those of us who work within the Scottish universities to maintain their prestige in the international world of education, scholarship and research.

ANDREW HOOK
JUDITH HOOK

24 Camperdown Road
Aberdeen

Rail Cuts

Sir, Your readers may conclude that Mr David Bowick's attempt to stand aside from the No Rail Cuts campaign (Letters 12 March) owes more to relentless pressure from the Department of the Environment than to a real desire to see our campaign fail – after all the British Rail Board stands to lose as much as the unions if the anti-rail lobby wins the day. Yet he is doing himself a disservice if he refuses to take credit for the very valuable part he and his colleagues at the Board played in drawing the public's attention to the appalling threat that hangs over the future of Britain's rail network.

Before the campaign was launched in December a number of meetings were held at the Board's headquarters, which were attended by rail union leaders and their advisers, and very senior Board staff. At these a horrifying picture emerged of how the railways faced certain and irreversible decline if government policies on investment and revenue support (which at that stage had not been made public) were persisted in until the end of the decade. From this information the unions concluded – and BRB officials concurred – that the logical outcome would be a network of less than 4,000 miles. To illustrate what such a network would look like, a map was helpfully made available which showed no railways in Scotland north of Edinburgh and Glasgow, nothing in Wales except the lines to Holyhead and Swansea, no lines in Cornwall, and in East Anglia only the main line to Norwich.

Two days before the campaign was launched a draft of our briefing document was sent to the Board's headquarters. Apart from suggesting two minor amendments (which we made) no objections were raised about the facts presented or the conclusions drawn. In the weeks since then many of the unions' worst fears have been realised: investment is to be frozen for five years at a level 40 per cent below what the Board told the Tory Government was the minimum necessary to maintain a healthy system; revenue support is being cut in real terms this year – a decision which is forcing up fares again on 28 March and at least once more later in the year, and is driving passengers off the trains in thousands; the freight subsidy has to be eliminated by 1978, and the Board seems resigned to losing virtually all goods traffic.

What a pity Mr Bowick feels he has to write letters like the one you published. Why don't he and the Board throw their full weight behind our campaign in trying to get a sensible transport policy out of the Government?

RICHARD FAULKNER

No Rail Cuts Campaign Committee
Greater London House
Hampstead Road
London NW1

Subsidising Political Parties

Sir, Why is Crucifer (NS 12 March) so against Exchequer subsidies for political parties? No new principle is involved. The postal delivery of election addresses in parliamentary elections is already paid for out of public funds. As a result the elector is much better served for

Photograph taken under difficult circumstances

They say it isn't cruel

Veal calves are torn from their mothers several days after birth, are reared in wooden crates too small for them to lie down comfortably or turn round. They are given no drinking water; and are deliberately kept deficient in iron to produce white meat.
Although this treatment is – at present – perfectly legal, the National Society for the Abolition of Factory Farming believes it is inhumane and that conditions for veal calves and other agricultural animals should be improved. If you agree, you can do something to help. Fill in the coupon at the bottom of this advertisement and help to fight factory farming now.

If every animal lover in the country gave to our fighting fund, we could surely crush this evil.

Fight Factory Farms

To: The Hon. Secretary, N.S.A.F.F,
42 Mount Pleasant Rd., SE13.
Please enrol me as a member and keep me up-to-date with the Society's activities. I enclose a cheque/P.O. for £1.50 membership fee.

Name.....

Address.....

.....

I would like to make a donation of £_____to the Fighting Fund, which is included with my membership fee.

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information about the candidates and what they stand for than in the case of a local election, where delivery of election material still depends upon voluntary effort.

Political parties play a vital role in a democracy. They provide the voter with a choice of both policies and personalities. They promote discussion of current affairs. They serve as important channels of communication between those who take decisions and those on the receiving end of them. All these things they are expected to do at the present time on a shoe-string, and in consequence they do many of them badly. Greater Exchequer support would enable political parties to do these tasks a great deal better, much to the benefit and strengthening of democracy.

If subsidies were paid on the basis of votes received at elections, existing parties would be kept on their toes and new parties would not be unfairly disadvantaged. Frivolous candidatures could be discouraged by setting a threshold – say 10 per cent of the votes – below which no candidate or party could benefit. Surely this would be preferable to the present situation where large amounts of voluntary effort are spent promoting bingo, totes, prize-draws and fêtes, all in order to raise sums of money which are totally inadequate to do the job properly.

ALEC STRACHAN
Chairman
Loughborough Constituency Labour Party
3 Westfield Drive
Loughborough

St Paul's Fields

Sir, The letter (NS 5 March) from Peter de Cory and others (of West London College), describing the horror of working in old buildings, completely misses the planning point. The West Kensington Environment Campaign is fighting a planning question – whether or not there should be open space in an overcrowded borough within a city.

While he writes on behalf of a special interest group who will stand to benefit from the college being built (just a small point – he's also a member and ex-chairman of Hammersmith's Planning Committee), I write from the public interest, adequately represented, we feel, by 11,300 signatures on the petition for open space. This has just been supported by 165 local teachers (only 12 of them non-Inner London Education Authority) who have written to Mr Crosland opposing the development of the college.

They point out that the primary and secondary schools in the area suffer badly from overcrowding and lack of external recreation facilities, compounding the difficulty of teaching successfully in a tense and depressed urban environment. They say that building on this land, suited and always used for physical recreation, is 'both short-sighted and unreasonable'.

The 11,300 people appeal to Mr Crosland to revoke both planning permissions, or at least hold an inquiry. Surely he cannot perpetuate a situation in which local schools have to 'bus' their children half an hour (each way) to organised games? Can that be the city of the future – while ILEA build on local open space?

We wish to see Mr Crosland and Mr Mulley act together, one to revoke permissions (or hold an inquiry), the other to promise an immediate new loan sanction for a cheaper scheme in, for instance, the existing buildings of our first suggested alternative site -- against which Mr de Cory's arguments are weak to the point of disappearance.

Mr Crosland would thus be:

(1) righting the error of a Conservative minister;

(2) correcting an abuse by the GLC and ILEA of their powers to grant themselves planning permission, and by a borough which allowed its planning powers to be controlled by a special-pleading faction;

(3) standing for real local democracy;

(4) hopefully, taking the chance to lecture the GLC on their open-space powers, of which they deny knowledge, and even, wickedly, clipping a few tens of millions of public spending.

STEPHEN FRY
West Kensington Environment Campaign
2 Meard Street
London W1

Sir, It may be helpful to clarify the position of the Hammersmith council over the use of the St Paul's School site (NS 2 February). Following this council's decision that it could not afford to purchase the site for public open space, we have supported the principle of providing local authority housing, education facilities and public open space on this land. The need for all three is self-evident to anyone with knowledge of Hammersmith.

Our objective has been to achieve a balanced development. The education proposals have been approved and supported by Hammersmith council. The open space provision on the north and south-west of the site has been accepted and welcomed by us. The argument between Hammersmith and the GLC is over the number of housing units the latter want to put on the site. We believe that their proposals constitute a serious over-development. Our concern therefore is over the scale and not the principle of a mixed development on the St Paul's School site.

BARRIE STEAD
Leader of the Council
Town Hall
Hammersmith

NCOs of the Law

Sir, Jeremy Bugler broke faith by naming and quoting me in his article on barristers' clerks (NS 5 March). That I was fully justified in the fears I expressed to him, should he quote me, was borne out by the events of the 24 hours following publication. The quote attributed to me, out of context, gives a false picture of my relationships with the chambers referred to, making some clarification necessary. Prior to my present chambers opening, I received two months' training from the Clerks at Cloisters and since then have so far received from them and many other clerks mutual help and support, that all barristers' clerks give and need to give under the existing system to each other.

I did not wish to single out any member of a profession whose attitude to women, in my experience, is conservative. There was no obligation on the Chief Clerk at Cloisters to give me any training at all, and I doubt that many others would have been so ready to assist.

MARY HICKSON
6 Bowden Street
London SE11

JEREMY BUGLER *writes*: Miss Hickson is mistaken. I interviewed her on the basis of quoting and naming her and never gave any undertaking to the contrary. On parting, I did say that I would let her know later what I was quoting, and I forgot to do so. For that much I sincerely apologise, but I cannot expand this contrition to alter the whole terms of the interview for Miss Hickson's convenience.

I will add that the evident pressure put on Miss Hickson after publication of her milk-and-water indiscretions – 'They don't want a woman to be a clerk. The senior clerk there [at Cloisters] just told me to go away and get married' – is proof of what I was writing about. The barristers' clerks are too powerful. It's a pity to see Miss Hickson, clerk to the one progressive chambers that has broken out of the corral of the Inns of Court, falling so quickly back into line.

The Whitehall Conspiracy

Sir, As one of the members of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Expenditure which is to carry out an investigation into the civil service, I was interested in Francis Ford's view of us in 'The Whitehall Conspiracy' (NS 5 March). I notice that he considers that we are a stage army of a few MPs, with little time or expertise or powers of inquiry and that we shall carry out our amateurish investigations in between hangovers induced by free gins on the flight back from Washington.

He should have done a little more research before sounding off in his amateurish way. First, the committee has the widest possible terms of reference, being concerned with the management and staffing of the service in all its aspects and not just with pay and conditions. Secondly, it can summon anybody it likes to give evidence and commission research. Thirdly, its members have a very great deal of expertise on civil service and management matters. The Labour members of the committee alone have as much expertise on the matter between them as any other group in the country. Fourthly, the Fulton Committee was concerned with vastly more than modernising training. It made important recommendations on opening the higher civil service to professionally qualified staff; on ministerial policy advisers; on secrecy; on the analysis and planning of public expenditure and on the accountability of the civil service. It drew its criticisms of the service from an independent inquiry (on which I served) of the kind Mr Ford advocates. The Committee of Expenditure will be able to establish just what progress has been made in implementing these recommendations and to pursue all the issues raised by Mr Ford and many he has not thought of. Michael English's committee has already shown in its dealings with the Treasury over the last two years that even in its present developing state the Expenditure Committee can be a very effective vehicle for calling the civil service to account. Or wasn't Mr Ford aware of that either?

JOHN GARRETT
House of Commons

Power to the Persons

Sir, In view of the damaging implication in David Mitchell's last letter (NS 12 March), I must refute the suggestion that I was at work on a study of the militant campaign with the help of the Suffragette Fellowship as long ago as 1965. I did not contemplate writing a book on the subject before the autumn of 1972, nor have I ever approached the Suffragette Fellowship for help.

JILL CRAIGIE
66 Pilgrims Lane
London NW3

Stage Directions

Sir, J. B. Priestley once acted in one of his own plays in the West End: Arthur Marshall is mistaken in thinking Priestley 'never acted professionally himself' (NS 12 March).

Shaw may, as Marshall says, have been sparing with his stage directions, but he was rather fussy about the physical characteristics of his actors. In the preface to *St Joan* he even says that the actress playing the title part should have large eyes.

JACK ELLIS
25 The Embankment
Twickenham, Middlesex

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SPRING BOOKS

Malcolm Bradbury

Who's Afraid of Georgie Girl?

George Eliot: The Emergent Self by RUBY V. REDINGER *Bodley Head* £6.95

'September 1856 made a new era in my life, for it was then that I began to write Fiction.' A new era, indeed: for now G. H. Lewes's 'strong minded woman', Mary Ann Evans, that once Evangelical, now free-thinking, always questing intelligence, turned away from her liberal translations and her essays on literature towards what had long drawn her, the paths of imagination, the paths that in her Warwickshire adolescent days she had so needed and distrusted as the way of egotism and withdrawal; now writing became both 'a part of my religion' and also, and not incidentally, the basis for an economic independence, a proper industriousness; now, in short, Mary Ann Evans became the person she would shortly name as George Eliot. It was a late and potent flowering, an act of self-realisation, generating a change in her psychic nature, her very physique and appearance, though it reached back into the past and was made out of it – out of her religion, her family relations, her sexual character, her moral self-portrait. The way of literature was now made valid, in part by virtue of the anonymities of her social position as Lewes's consort, in part by virtue of the new domestic order she had won for herself out of the chaos of Victorian sexual, marital and relational uncertainties.

And of course the new era in her life was also a new era for the evolution of the novel, one of those happy occasions when, as Henry James liked to phrase it, the novel became 'more itself'. If, today, we still think of the novel as, in some essential way, a liberal realist form – as I think we still do, even if much of the thrust of contemporary fictional experiment has been to make it something else – this also has something to do with September 1856. Before she began writing novels, Mary Ann Evans had noted something about their nature: the novel, she said, unlike most other art, had only *potential* form. She had noted much else, including the fact that, as she saw it, the novel by women was weakly cultivated in England, because the 'whole field of reality' was not open to the English feminine nature. The contrast was with France, with its looser marriage-tie, its more fluid role for women. 'Women become superior in France by being admitted to a common fund of ideas'; in England it 'requires a larger sum of conditions to produce a perfect specimen'.

George Eliot had loosened the marriage tie, she had mastered intelligence as a component of her sexuality, and she had invented a novel that had a complex role commensurate with the very complexity of being George Eliot, that fictional man-woman who was half-concealment, half the sum of her becoming. Her novels are therefore acts of double realisation. *In* them the characters, facets of her lived experience played against minute observation, aspire and grow in a world intractably and rigorously real, a world solidly present, securely public and historical, with its own energies of aspiration and progress, and they consort with it so that relations which today we might deny are potentially possible. *Through* them, there works another character, that of George Eliot, who by imagination, sympathy, the feeling for life and love, makes writing itself a principle of realisation, of moral analysis and growth. George Eliot had come to this hardly; no one can accuse her of taking reality for granted. She had started in more sacred places and got to it by lesson. Reality becomes a place in the middle of things, between the egotistical and the sacrificial, the private and the public, the puritanical and the romantic, the spiritual and the fleshly, the provincial and the cosmopolitan, the male and the female.

All this is why a creative biography of George Eliot fascinates; it is also why it has its dangers. Her pseudonym was vastly more than concealment; yet it did also mean to conceal. It constituted an area of intercourse from others freed from aspects of egotism and 'hard curiosity'; it was a sanctified space, and in it a kind of idealised liberal being, a self that self restrains, an existence both public and private, emerges. This is a due and just field for our attention; and it is very much the subject of Ruby Redinger's new study, a large, sometimes repetitive, but deeply ambitious enterprise of gentle penetration into the awarenesses and resources that feed into her fictional self-assertion and her fictional making. George Eliot gave us all the clues for a biographical comprehension of her, and she saw the novel as an act of self; at the same time, as she defined that self, she held on to the Victorian concept of a decent reticence, called back letters, wrote no autobiography. Since then, of course, the doors have opened much wider. Most of the essential scholarship has been accumulated, largely by Gordon Haight. And it was Haight who, a few years ago, gave us one of the best modern literary biographies I know: judicious and careful, it provides a map to a psychic portrait, which we need, without coercion of the subject. Any new steps have to be closer to surmise, to the biography of 'perhaps' and 'it is possible', or else to go over the Haight ground again; Professor Redinger's book does both, and so risks a double offence, to George Eliot and to Haight himself. Yet I think it curiously works, in that happy hinterland between serious scholarly exegesis and larger hypothesis, some of this mildly foolish, but most of it subtle and well-designed, to realise the complexity of George Eliot's nature as a writer. In some ways a slow book, it is nonetheless an act of organised accumulation; it is in more than one sense a creative life.

And it also opens wider, though perhaps here not wide enough, the question of George Eliot's sexual career, in its larger and its narrower sense. George Eliot's was in many ways a self of self-achievement; she lived and wrote for that principle. Accordingly she was, as a person, habitually disturbing, and Professor Redinger conveys a good deal of the psycho-sexual character of her relationships and her work. She tends, though, to persist with the portrait, now commonplace, of George Eliot as sexually recessive, drawn into various communitarian groupings and liaisons through her disposition of mind rather than through her sexual disposition. Too often displayed to us as the misunderstood woman who suffered from Victorian conventionality or hypocrisy until, by virtue of her dignity and her fiction, she won her way back into general respect *despite* the liaison with Lewes, she in fact surely stands for a whole energetic spirit of sexual redefinition in Victorian English life.

The freethinking circles in which she moved via the Brays and the Hennells could fairly raise parental and brotherly anxieties about a lot more than her attitude toward the Deity; long before she was to be found observing that the sanctity of marriage lay alone in the sanctity of the relationship itself, which is sound enough liberal lore, she had moved through communitarian households of a far from conventional kind, and in them been found unconventional. A recurrent situation develops: she will enter into a complex sexual household, to become an agent of turmoil and disturbance – as with Dr Brabant, John Chapman, Herbert Spencer and the phalanstery group around Lewes himself. Miss Evans arrives, as she did into Chapman's household (of wife, resident mistress, and various sexual attachments), unmarried, serious, with her intelligence, her papers and translations, her editorial skills, her piano, her attentive sense of relationship. Sexual jealousies are stimulated; the womenfolk rebel; the form of her sexual nature becomes a threat.

In the phrenological circles which helped to give a scientific base and discourse for the psychological speculations of the time, Miss Evans's organs of intelligence and amativeness were alike known to be well-

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developed; it was a formidable combination. Although, then, she moved in circles where sexual unconventionality was clearly no oddity, and where liaisons such as that Lewes and George Eliot contracted were reasonably familiar, she was felt to be exceptional. This evidently had to do with the famous strong-mindedness and the energy of the asserted female intellect for which she came to stand; she was felt to shift the ecology of sexual relations, and stand for an altered principle of the female role. Such questions are not idle since they did essentially redefine *relationship*. And all this became generative in the distinctive personality of George Eliot, and therefore reached deep into the novels, which are, amongst other things, as urgent an inquiry into sexuality and womanliness in her world as we can find. Her disturbing force had an equalising principle of recessiveness, of fear; this was compounded in the strained balance of her creative personality.

The problem of biography is to generate a vitalistic portrait of a person; the problem of a literary biography is to generate as round a portrait as we can have of a vitalistic person, that sort of person we recognise as creative. That is why books like Professor Redinger's matter, and why it is important to recognise in it a justified line of inquiry, one that will work only if its codes are subtle and its curiosity gentle. And most of the time Professor Redinger is; that is why her study merits a fair place on the shelf.

John Fowles

Royal Stews

The Cleveland Street Scandal by H. MONTGOMERY HYDE *W. H. Allen* £5.95

Traditional English Civet: First catch your heir to the throne and a brace of lords, hang well, marinade them in their own brothel; add a *bouquet terni* of legal wigs and establishment hypocrisy, with a Liberal dash of red pepper; then cover completely and simmer for several months. This most popular of English game stews is ready for the table when the escaped savour (what Italian chefs call the *profumo*) is overpowering. It is equally delicious hot or cold . . . and especially when the cooking is in the skilled hands of that Elizabeth David of the retold *cause célèbre*, Mr Montgomery Hyde. Gourmets of the upper-class scandal have a princely meal ahead; and moralists, a problem.

The mountain broke from a molehill. In July 1889 some money was stolen from the Central Telegraph Office. A messenger-boy was found to have the suspiciously high sum of 18 shillings in his pocket. He claimed it was earned by 'private work' for a Mr Hammond of 19 Cleveland Street (the westward parallel to Charlotte Street), but was reluctant to specify the nature of his moonlighting; then admitted he had been approached by a post-office clerk, Newlove, who had also mackereled several other lads. 'I know a gentleman . . . he wants to have a game of spooning with you.'

In short, courtesy of the GPO, Hammond was running a male bordello, and the file went straight to the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, James Monro. He called in Abberline, the detective chief inspector he had used on the Jack the Ripper murders of the previous year. This formidably conscientious pair very soon realised they had a case not of buggery, but of political dynamite, on their hands. The arrested clerk told Abberline at once that among the regular irregulars at Cleveland Street were Lord Arthur Somerset and the Earl of Euston. Other distinguished names were mentioned.

Somerset was the bombshell. A younger son (then aged 37) of the Duke of Beaufort, he seemed typical enough of his kind: a major in the Blues, good war record in the Sudan, an expert on horses. One of the fine gallery of 'Spy' cartoons and photographs the author has assembled shows him breeched and gaitered, the quintessence of aristocratic Newmarket, a jolly fellow with a touch of swagger. Weak, one guesses, but not an evil man – an impression that survives to the end. But what must have horrified the two policemen was the knowledge that he was both equerry and intimate of the Prince of Wales, in charge of his Marlborough House stables.

This white-hot buck was passed – hilariously like the ball down an inept three-quarter line (frequent fumbles and misfired scissors) – to the Home Secretary, on to the Director of Public Prosecutions, who lobbed it to the government law officers, who bundled it to the Prime Minister (Lord Salisbury), who hastily flicked it away to his right wing, Lord Chancellor Halsbury. That eminent diehard then wrote an opinion – against prosecuting Somerset – that will still bring an incredulous snarl to any democrat's lip. But by the time it was penned, it was too late. Newlove and another minor figure in the imbroglio had been smuggled through a court and given ludicrously light sentences (a similar crime had received a life sentence in the previous sessions). Somerset himself had run for the Continent and left his affairs in charge of a sharp young solicitor named Newton. At first no one in his own circle would believe 'Podge' Somerset guilty. But Newton was too sharp – he tried to induce a chief prosecution witness to discover a sudden urge to emigrate, and went over personally to Holland, where the brothel-owner Hammond had skipped, and saw him safely on a ship to the United States. By then Henry Labouchere, W. T. Stead and the Radical press had got wind of a very nasty rat under the cabinet floorboards. If Newton had behaved improperly, so had the Government in not officiously striving to have Hammond extradited before he was spirited away. Somerset returned to England, but then hurriedly departed again. Labouchere later stated in the House of Commons that it was with Lord Salisbury's connivance – the Government knew a warrant was imminent – but the evidence is firmly against this.

Somerset, without funds and dogged by detectives, led a miserable life on the run: in Turkey, Hungary, Austria, France, desperately trying for even the most humble jobs – including one with the Rouen tramway company. His excuse for not facing the music was that other names might emerge if he appeared in court, and suspicion immediately attached itself to the Prince of Wales's elder son, Prince Albert Victor ('Eddy'). Eddy was a dissolute and brainless young man, and he may well have had a homosexual phase under his bizarre Cambridge tutor (and Virginia Woolf's cousin), J. K. Stephen – whom some now see as the true Jack the Ripper. It seems probable that he did indeed visit Cleveland Street, but Hammond also provided female prostitutes there and no direct evidence from boys or ponces was ever produced. Eddy had already bid for the hand of the future Tsarina Alexandra, and after the scandal was to try more successfully for that of Mary of Teck (who, on Eddy's death in 1892, married his brother George). Yet in private Somerset seemed more anxious to establish that he had not introduced the prince to Cleveland Street, rather than categorically deny that he had ever been there. His distressed father – in sexual matters at least, as straight as a die – packed Eddy off post-haste to India, and put his own kind of pressure on the Government to have the case handled with discretion.

Somerset never faced the music, ending his days (in 1926) in the South of France. But two related prosecutions did come. A fierce young Radical editor, Ernest Parke, named the Earl of Euston in an article; was sued for criminal libel, and lost. Euston admitted to having been once to Cleveland Street, but under the impression he was to view female *poses plastiques*, the Victorian euphemism for a strip-show. Unfortunately the main defence witness – some better ones rather mysteriously did not appear – was an outrageous young professional queen, endearingly (at this remove) unimpressed by the majesty of the law. The judge's ferocious demolition of his character left the jury little choice, and Parke went to prison.

So, a little later, did Somerset's lawyer, Newton, in spite of an attempted deal between the Attorney-General and the defence to get him merely bound over. He ran into yet another odd number on the judicial roulette-wheel – not that he suffered one bit professionally, since the most ancient closed shop in the land, that of his fellow-solicitors, promptly declared him innocent. In 1911 he defended Crippen, and once again behaved unethically. Finally in 1913 he was caught (tampering with money is so much more wicked than tampering with justice) over a land fiddle and spent three years in jail.

No Victorian case is harder to judge in retrospect. Very few of the angels and villains fall as one might expect. The police and the DPP (and his assistant) acted with conspicuous probity throughout; it was Downing Street that went in for the sepia. The Beaufort family also behaved well: the

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broker between Somerset and his ducal parents was his sister, Lady Waterford, who showed a true affection and understanding of her brother's homosexuality that would not disgrace our own age. Even Somerset himself, name in the mud and exiled for ever, gains a kind of genuine stoic decency. Above all, though on grounds of press freedom and equality before the law one may approve the hounding the Radicals gave the Salisbury ministry, one also feels the same hounding, based as it was on a very recent and notoriously bad addition ('Any male persons, who in public or private . . .' – the 'Blackmailer's Charter') to the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, was in a patently inhumane cause.

The Radicals might have done better to attack the law itself, not its application; but of course Victorian progressive politics was the very reverse in sexual matters. Indeed the homosexual amendment had been introduced by Labouchere himself on Stead's advice. He paid for it, since his part in the Somerset affair gained him the undying hatred of the royal family. Gladstone did not dare propose his name to the Queen when he formed his own government afterwards. *The Cleveland Street Scandal* provides a classic sample of the multiple contradictions of late Victorian society. And it has all the elements of a first-class political thriller. If film producers have any sense, they'll be queueing up at Mr Hyde's door.

David Lodge

Mine, of Course

Notes for a New Culture by PETER ACKROYD *Vision* £3.40

Poetry and Repression: Revisionism from Blake to Stevens by HAROLD BLOOM *Yale* £7.20

When Browning's impenetrably obscure poem *Sordello* was first published, Douglas Jerrold, happening to pick it up after recovering from a severe illness, read a couple of pages, turned pale, and exclaimed, 'My God, I'm an idiot!' With so much flu about at the moment, either of these books might have a similar effect on a vulnerable reader. Peter Ackroyd's obscurity seems to be the consequence of carelessness, but is also, more sinisterly, a rhetorical device; in Harold Bloom's case it seems to be the consequence of authorial egotism, a failure to imagine what it is like to read what he has written. These two books, one by the literary editor of the *Spectator* (where he writes quite lucidly) and the other by a Yale professor, make it easy to understand why literary criticism is falling into neglect and disrepute as a mode of humane discourse.

Mr Ackroyd's book is a polemic in favour of modernism in its most extreme forms, as defined by such figures as Nietzsche, Mallarmé, Duchamp, Joyce and the theoreticians of the *nouvelle critique*, celebrating the emergence of the idea of art as autonomous, of literature as 'the display of fiction within its own arbitrariness', and pouring scorn on more traditional mimetic and pragmatic views. There is nothing novel about the argument except for the curious distortions and oversimplifications of Mr Ackroyd's cultural history. He creates an unnecessary terminological confusion at the outset by describing the Age of Reason as the 'first modernism' which was reversed by the 'second modernism' (which most of us refer to as the first) and dramatises this reversal by ignoring the Romantic contribution to it, referring airily to the 'rationalist-romantic I' as if these terms were synonymous. At the other end of the time scale, it is very puzzling to be told that 'the first moment in England of formal self-consciousness' occurred in the notoriously anti-modernist Fifties (and what about all the form-conscious essays and manifestos of James, Conrad, Eliot, Pound, Woolf, long before?). Our puzzlement is not dispelled when Mr Ackroyd proceeds to throw John Braine into the ring with Robbe-Grillet to show that English fiction in the Fifties was quite traditional in form after all, for he alone suggested otherwise. It was hardly necessary to muddle literary history to this extent to make his general point.

Notes for a New Culture owes a good deal to French structuralism in style as well as substance (if substance is the word I want, rather than, say, absence, on which, according to Mr Ackroyd, literature itself is founded). Much of it reads like a parody or bad translation of Roland Barthes or *Tel Quel*, especially in the use of metaphor – ostensibly to clarify a difficult concept but in fact to intimidate the reader by cloaking the concept in deeper obscurity. For example, Flaubert 'is the first modern writer to detach his "presence" from his own writings, so that the language sustains itself with its own weight'. Now the basic meaning of 'sustain' is to hold *up*, and there is nothing in nature that is held up by its own *weight*, so there is no sense to be obtained from the metaphor. Or consider this:

> But if there is a context in Nietzsche that accommodates these multiple levels of discourse, it cannot be their societal or theological one. It is not located in any affirmative principle, as the languages of medieval and classical culture had been, but rather in the fissure between these levels.

Again, the basic meaning of fissure is a narrow vertical opening, which goes down *through* levels, not a horizontal space *between* levels; and even if it could bear the latter meaning it would have to be in the plural in this sentence, since the levels are 'multiple' – if, that is, Mr Ackroyd were saying anything at all precise here.

It is this sort of writing that gives structuralism a bad name, and I say so without irony because I agree with Mr Ackroyd that the somewhat stagnant state of literary criticism in this country has much to gain from an exposure to Continental theory and practice. But what it can learn most profitably is not the language of critical intimidation – the glib paradox, the bullying assertion, the resonant but meaningless metaphor – but more precise methods of formal analysis derived from linguistics and semiology. We could then begin to tackle the problem – far more rewarding than Mr Ackroyd's absurdly selective tradition-building, in which the history of literature is one long preparation for the advent of Mr Jeremy Prynne ('the first poetry to exercise the full potential of the written language') – the problem of accounting for the variety of modes and attitudes to writing in the modern period. It might then become evident to Mr Ackroyd that the literature he happens to like is only perceptible against the background of the literature he doesn't like and that to dismiss the latter is as self-defeating as it is arrogant.

Professor Bloom is in a different class as a scholar and critic: immensely learned and more thoroughly steeped in Romantic poetry, perhaps, than any other man living. Yet *Poetry and Repression* is, if anything, even more resistant to reading than *Notes for a New Culture*. A prime inspiration for both books is Nietzsche, who said 'There are no facts, only interpretations' – a suggestive but easily abused proposition. Professor Bloom starts with the basic idea that poetry, especially Romantic poetry, is made out of the poet's attempt to 'revise' the poetry of a predecessor, by 'repressing' what he finds antithetical in it to his own

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poetic drives. There is obviously an important truth here, even if it sometimes generates silly overstatements ('Tennyson's transformation of Keats . . . was the largest single factor in British and American poetry from about 1830 until about 1915'). More dubiously, the idea is extended to the process of reading, so that we keep great or 'strong' poems alive by 'misreading' them. One might think that what is valid in Nietzsche's point about interpretation is adequately implied by the word 'reading', without the precious negative prefix, but Gnosticism, the Kabbalah, Freud and some of the same structuralist *savants* cited by Ackroyd are invoked by Professor Bloom to give authority (and mystification) to his method of 'antithetical criticism'. The result is this kind of writing:

> Is *Tintern Abbey* an *aporia*, or is it the prolepsis of a dark passage, a major internalisation of Milton's *agon* with tradition? Or is it, as an antithetical reading or misreading would seem to tell us, a very great visionary lie, not as much a myth of memory as it is a utilisation of memory as a lie against time? Actually or potentially, these are all strong misreadings, and they may not differ from one another as much as they would like to, though clearly they also cannot be reconciled. Which of the three readings/misreadings would cost us too much of the poem's strength? Or to say it in more Nietzschean terms, of these three errors, these three composite tropes, which is the most necessary error? Why, mine of course, though of the three it is the one I like the least, because it increases the problematics-of-loss in the poem.

It is not so much the jargon that annoys one, though it is tiresome enough, as the extraordinary vanity of the discourse, its assumption that we are interested not only in its conclusions but in every wavering thread of cogitation that leads up to these conclusions. The 'Mine, of course!' intended to be roguishly disarming, merely increases one's exasperation. I find it significant that the book contains no index, nor a single note on sources, so that the reader has no easy way of checking back on the meaning of the jargon or of independently placing the text in some wider frame of reference. It seems impossible to arrest the text, to stem the flow of words, to grasp a single point that can be simply weighed and tested. Gradually one's eyes glaze over, the mind goes numb. Somewhere in the background Professor Bloom is misreading away, tireless and wonderfully pleased with himself.

Among this week's contributors:

J. P. STERN is Professor of German at University College London; his *Hitler: The Führer and the People* appeared last year.

JOHN FOWLES is currently translating Molière's *Don Juan* for the National Theatre.

DAVID LODGE is the author of *Changing Places*, published last year by Secker & Warburg.

JAMES FENTON'S poems, *Terminal Moraine*, appeared in 1972.

RUSSELL DAVIES is pianist, trombonist and arranger for the Savoy Jazzmen.

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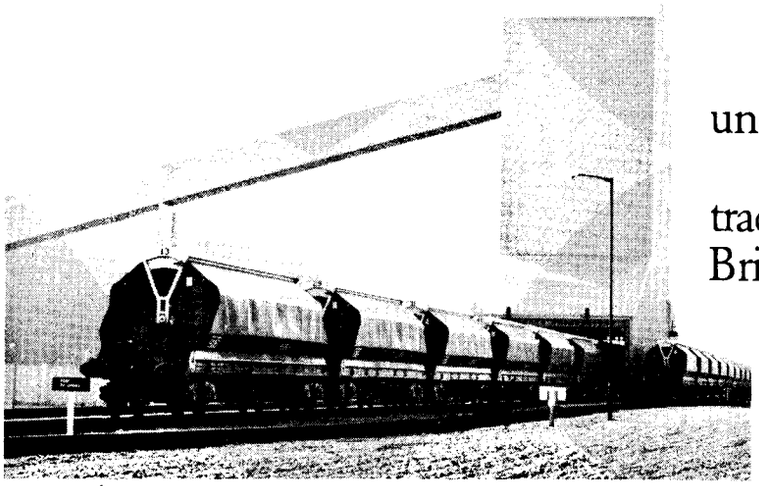

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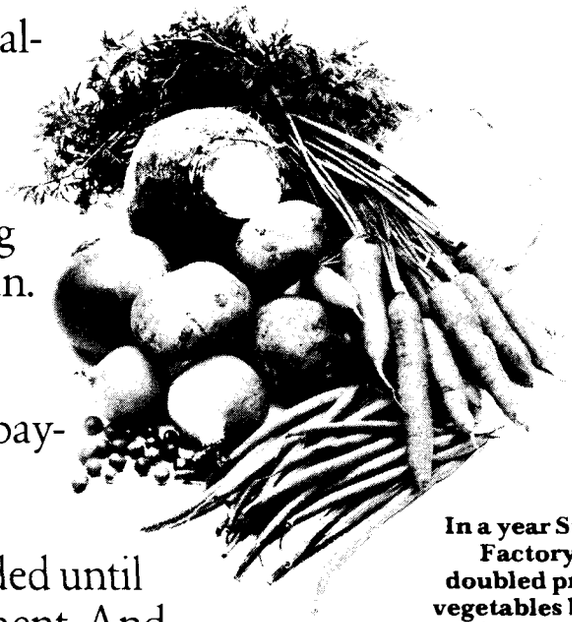

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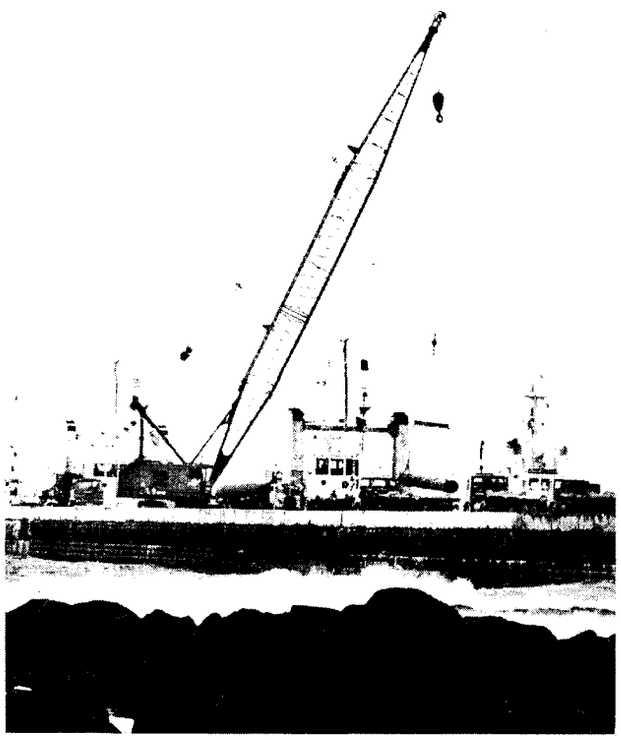

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Martin Amis

Life Class

Picked-Up Pieces by JOHN UPDIKE *Deutsch* £6.95

The adversaries of good book-reviewing are many and various, but the chief one is seldom mentioned – perhaps because of its ubiquity. We hear a lot, especially from academics, about reviews not being academic enough; and it is true that 'name' reviewing of the Evel-Knievel-on-Kierkegaard variety often shows the reviewer hideously stretched. We hear a lot, especially from publishers, about reviewers using books as springboards for tangential musings; and it is true that the book trade might well improve if the blurb-transcribing sots of yesteryear were reinstated. And we hear a lot, especially from authors, about 'showing off', about metropolitan spite, and about the unearned asperity of the menial scribbler – 'i.e., cheek', as F. W. Bateson once labelled the tendency. These vices exist, perhaps, but they don't seriously diminish that corner of intellectual life which literary journalism inhabits. The crucial defect is really no different from that of any other kind of writing: it is dullness. The literary pages throng with people about whom one has no real feelings either way – except that one can't be bothered to read them.

As a literary journalist, John Updike has that single inestimable virtue: having read him once, you admit to yourself, almost with a sigh, that you will have to read everything he writes. At a time when the reviewer's role has devolved to that of a canary in a pre-war coalmine, Updike reminds you that the review can, in its junior way, be something of a work of art, or at least a worthy vehicle for the play of ideas, feeling and wit. His stance is one of ultimate serviceability: the alert and ironic layman unanxiously detached from the world of literary commerce (indeed, 'I must be one of the few Americans with a bachelor-of-arts degree who has never met either Robert Lowell or Norman Mailer'). And the hectic pungency of his prose is answered by the intense, if erratic, strength of his responses. Updike's reviewing is high-powered enough to win the name of literary criticism – which is to say, it constantly raises the question (a question more interesting than it at first sounds), 'What is literature?' The fact that he never finds a good reply to it is just one of the reasons why he needs to be judged by the highest standards, his own standards.

A rather workaday grumble to be made about *Picked-Up Pieces* is that many of its pieces ought never to have been picked up – at least not without emendation. Complaints about the price of particular novels or a book's margin-sizes may look well enough in the columns of the *New Yorker* but appear footling between hard covers. Several books-received notices on humdrum theologians should have been exorcised, and it is hard not to be startled by a 60-word citation to Thornton Wilder (which carries a 50-word footnote humourlessly justifying its inclusion). Include away: here, plainly, Updike is more interested in his personal filing-system than in his normal courteousness towards the reader. And then, too, the hot snort of the hobby-horse can be felt on and off throughout books of this kind. For instance, Updike is mad about golf, and three excitable articles on this pastime are reprinted. Part of the trouble, no doubt, is that a regular reviewer will often have to gouge standard-length pieces out of substandard books. And, inevitably, Updike will sometimes look like an Olympic swimmer in a bathtub.

The heart of *Picked-Up Pieces*, however, is its fiction reviews, where Updike can always revert to first principles and so remain unimplicated by the frequent banality of his material. Updike goes at fiction with a firm idea of what he takes a novel to be, but he is incomparably good at conveying the *weight* of an author's prose, the lineaments of the talent behind it. Even when he is scorning what seems admirable or praising what seems mischievous, there is never any clouding of the issues involved. Yet the readings are intractably polemical, and although Updike's methods are close to irreproachable, one can only react polemically to his findings.

For some reason, most of the novels Updike has chosen to review are translations. I thought at first that Updike must have some gluttonous craving for local colour, judging by his preparedness to read the likes of Simone Schwarz-Bart, Yambo Ouologuem, Ezekiel Mphahlele, G. Cabrera Infante, Paul van Ostaijen, Julio Cortázar, etc. Surely, one reads even the foreign classics in translation as a guilty duty, to get some blotched silhouette, as one might look at snapshots of inaccessible paintings. But Updike regards the language barrier as a rut which any frog could straddle:

> Distinctly unmusical, at least in translation . . . at least for a reader deprived of the original Polish . . . [the translator], who for all I know has done the best of all possible jobs . . . also excellent, at a guess, is the translation from the Dutch . . .

Updike can keep a straight face while noting the linguistic tang of translated 'Arab and Bantu exclamations'; and he is perfectly capable of talking about the *style* of a novel translated from the French translation of the Polish – which is like analysing the brushstrokes in a Brownie. It is an insensitivity that points to a radical imbalance in Updike's view of how novels work, and it loiters in everything he says about fiction.

Even Nabokov's fiction – and the seven essays on Nabokov are perhaps the most valuable thing in the book. The swank of Updike's prose provides the ideal window for the teeming haughtiness of Nabokov's: from his excesses ('his prose has never menaced a cowering reader with more bristling erudition, garlicky puns, bearish parentheses and ogreish winks') to, very nearly, his essence: 'Nabokov's is really an amorous style . . . it yearns to clasp diaphanous exactitude into its hairy arms.' Here, you feel sure, is a critic unimprovably equipped for and attuned to his author. But here too, suddenly, Updike's linguistic blindfold (e.g., Dmitri Nabokov's adjectives in his translation of *Glory* are caressingly praised, as if for all the world they were Vladimir's) is whipped off to reveal tightly shut eyes. 'Is art a game? Nabokov stakes his career on it'; he makes 'airtight boxes . . . detached from even the language of their composition'. If you substituted 'embodied in' for 'detached from even' you might get within hailing distance of Nabokov's art, but by now Updike is in full retreat. Nabokov, *horribile scriptu*, spurns 'psychology and sociology', confronting us 'with a fiction that purposely undervalues its own humanistic content'.

Uh-oh, one thinks. Updike is a Catholic, of the small-town Dionysian sort, and this does his writing no harm; yet he is also a Humanist, of the numinous Apollonian sort, and this does seem to account for that vein of folksy uplift which underlies his novels as well as his criticism. Thus, Auden's 'technical displays cast doubt upon the urgency of his inspiration' (presumably, then, Updike's ignorance of the form of the haiku, revealed in the previous paragraph, is an oblique tribute to Updike's urgency). Thus, Erica Jong's appallingly written and irreducibly autobiographical *Fear of Flying* is a 'lovable, delicious novel', because, well, in

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Updike's view Erica Jong has a lovable and delicious lifestyle. Would Updike defend this on the grounds that a writer's life can 'matter more than his works'? Or because, as Updike says five pages later, books can 'exist less as literature than as life'?

Life. 'Life.' Some people seem very keen on stressing their approval of this commodity, almost as if the rest of us had no time for the stuff. Updike, who likes fiction to believe in 'improvement' and 'a better world', crucially asserts that 'by a novel we understand an imitation of reality rather than a spurning of it', and grades them accordingly. But what's the difficulty? Life goes on regardless, and reality won't mind if a novel spurns it. The confusion is age-old, answering as it does to an authentic pang. If Updike granted art the same reverent autonomy he grants life, some 'improvement' would indeed take place: he would become a better critic. Meanwhile, get to grips with his funny, clever, butter-fingered book.

James Fenton

Kwalitee Street

Within the Family Circle by VIOLET POWELL
Heinemann £4.50

The trouble with this book is that if you read it quickly you won't understand it, and if you read it slowly you won't get through it. It's written by somebody called Lady Violet Powell, who used to be called Pakenham and is married to Anthony Powell. Lady Violet is the younger sister of the distinguished biographer of Christ. Her book is difficult to read because it is written in what you might call Kwalitee prose – every sentence has at least one clause or phrase too many, and if there is a silly word to use, instead of a sensible one, you may be sure that Lady Violet will find it. Electric light fittings do not hang, they depend from the ceiling. That sort of thing. There is much artfully concealed sloppiness, and there are some inexcusable errors of grammar. So: 'Precautions to keep female functions from the notice of coarse males was a perpetual problem to my mother's generation . . .' Oh they was, was it? Spelling is generally good, but the plural of curtsy or curtsey must be curtsies or curtseys. Curtsys sounds like an Old Master, perhaps a relation of Matsys.

Persevere however, if you must, and you will find some interesting sidelights on the life of the Anglo-Irish upper-crust in the years between the wars. This volume of autobiography describes four years of Lady Violet's strange existence, up to her marriage at the age of 22, together with several confusing excursions into family history. It is difficult most of the time to work out just how she managed to fill her days, when she was not hunting, fishing or playing 'Slosh'. On the other hand if you are keen on the little details, such as how to play the aforesaid Slosh, or the problems of peeing while out hunting, or the colour of the author's favoured face-powder (unless she's joking, it was green) – this is the book for you. It is the world that survives in the novels of Wodehouse (where servant-poaching is the ultimate sin, and there is an uncle called Bingo) and of Evelyn Waugh: at one of the endless parties described, there was

> an attempt at an all-in wrestling bout, which began with a man dressed in an exiguous leopard-skin bounding onto the floor with a girl partner whose nakedness was protected by a few strategically placed leaves. Hardly had these performers struck a pose which promised a jungle dance routine, when they were interrupted by a chap in the audience who shouted 'My God, that's my wife!' and tearing off his tail-coat went into a clinch with the male dancer, while the girl . . .

etc, etc. There are night-clubs called the Slippin', the Bag o' Nails and Smokey Joe's, which provide the real fun, and there is a charitable institution called the Eton Manor Club at Hackney Wick, where the family goes dancing with the lower classes. An equivalent of Catsmeat Potter-Pirbright turns up under the name of Hamish Erskine. He throws a sugar-lump down the length of a railway coach. Lady Violet, looking up from a copy of Proust, catches the lump in her teeth. Eventually Proust himself comes along, in the shape of Mr Powell, and they become engaged over the tea-table. The family circle widens, and they all settle down to write lots and lots of books.

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NB Two new Routledge chess books: **Basic Chess Openings** by Raymond Edwards (£1.50) is the long-awaited fourth volume of the *Routledge Chess Handbooks* and **Chessboard Delights** by Commins Mansfield MBE (75p) is a selection of the brightest episodes in masterplay over the past ten years selected from the *Sunday Telegraph*.

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Icecrust & Snowflake

1
A polished glancing. A blue
frost-bright dawn

And the ox's hoof-quagmire
At the ice-cumbered trough has
so far protected
A primrose.

And the wild mares, in the moor hollow,
Stand stupid with bliss
Among the first miraculous foal-flowers.

They are weeping for joy in a wind

That blows through the flint of the
ox's horn

2
The North Wind brought you too late

To the iron bar, rusted sodden
In the red soil.

The salmon weightless
In the flag of depth
Green as engine oil.

A snowflake in April
That touched, that registered
Was felt.

Solitary signal
Of a storm too late to get in
Past the iron bar's leaf

Through the window
Of the salmon's egg
With its eager eye.

The Virgin Knight

How did she prepare?

What salt was her shield?
What lime was her spur?
What phosphorous her visor?

What sigh was her sword?
What strand of mucous her baldric?
What lust her charger?

What month's blood was her gauntlets?
What placenta her breastplate?
What sperm her helm?

What secret weapon, what sgae bolg
Did she hide with a goat-skin?

Her lance was her naked waist
Her oath – a wetness

Her battle-cry
The silence between
Systole and diastole

Her heraldry – a lily

And as she rode out

The hills quaked
The sea cried in fear
Incredulous
The stars trembled

D. J. Enright

Willow Pattern

Birds gave the lovers no trouble at all,
At least the birds gave no trouble.

But now the lovers have turned to birds,
And birds – but the tale goes no further . . .

And why push events to their 'bitter end'?
Better to leave them to find out their own –

Just like the others, the birds and the lovers,
The troubles, and even the readers.

While the sky goes on, with angels and birds,
And the earth with its goblins and lovers.

Faux amis

I was expecting the démon de midi to call
And inflame me with new and enormous desires
For tea-ladies and dentists' assistants
And selected girl guides in the heather.
We would spend an exciting fortnight together.

Whereon this Frenchman from the South arrived,
Who seduced my wife and my two young daughters,
The Lady Mayoress and the Vicar's housekeeper,
Then bolted, leaving debts, in my new Bentley.
The démon du Midi – not the same chap apparently.

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J. P. Stern

Trusting Thomas

Unwritten Memories by KATJA MANN *Deutsch* £3.95

In 1889 the five Pringsheim children – Katja aged six and the boys all below ten – were painted by August von Kaulbach, Munich's most fashionable society painter. The portrait of these dark-eyed, intelligent-looking and beautiful children in pierrot costume has a charm which even a reviewer wary of the gush of some Mann biographers finds hard to resist. The picture became famous, was reproduced in society magazines, and in St Petersburg they even printed it on paper napkins. The young Thomas Mann in Lübeck, eight years older than Katja, fell in love with it, cut it out and pinned it up over his desk. Sixteen years later – after the death of Mann *père*, the collapse of the family firm and the publication of *Buddenbrooks*, Thomas Mann's first and probably greatest literary success – he and Katja Pringsheim were married and set out on that 50-year partnership which is the subject of this untidy and lively memoir.

'My parents kept quite a fine house,' Katja Mann writes, adding with the merest touch of self-consciousness, 'as the saying goes': and fine houses, charming guests, famous artists and all sorts of important people in Europe and America are presented as the background for a portrait of the writer Thomas Mann. For although there are a few glimpses of him as husband, father and provider for an ever-growing family (six children, all professionally but not always profitably involved in things of the mind), the portrait that emerges is that of a 'representative' writer and public person. And if Thomas Mann himself devised a complexly ironical and occasionally arch style to keep both readers and correspondents at a distance, Katja Mann does it by keeping up a flow of 'fun stories', delightfully catty anecdotes and biographical footnotes to the characters in Mann's novels.

As is to be expected, both politics and the literary scene are presented entirely from 'Tommy's' point of view, and any reader who hopes to be told what 'really' happened in Venice or in Davos, or 'whether there is anything behind' the story *Blood of the Walsungs*, will be disappointed. Katja is suspicious of critics and does not like source-hunters: 'the Germanists do far too much comparing as it is'. Where her husband and family are concerned, she is the soul of discretion. Nor does she throw any new light on the bewildering variety of Mann's political opinions, from the ironically tinged nationalism of *Meditations of an Unpolitical Man* of 1919, to his socialist sympathies and active opposition to the Cold War. Somehow these changes are presented as less abrupt and more fundamental than we know them to have been, if only because Mann's political views were invariably the reactive views of a 'seismographically' sensitive individual. Thus the *Meditations* were occasioned by his brother Heinrich's hostile assertion of a 'Western' radicalism at the outbreak of World War I; and when, 30 years later, Heinrich told Erika Mann 'your father and I now see eye to eye on political matters, only your father is somewhat more radical', it is Thomas Mann's personal situation rather than any fundamental 'ideological commitment' which determines his new outlook. Moreover, in the literary work itself (which is what matters) this new 'radicalism' leaves hardly a trace; the 'conservative imagination', freed from its reactionary ideology, remains dominant.

But this is taking us beyond the confines of the book. Katja is no intellectual. She tells us, perfectly truthfully, how nobody really believed that Hitler's mad bid for power would ever come to anything, and how badly they all – Furtwängler and Richard Strauss, Gerhard Hauptmann and Ernst Bertram – behaved when Hitler had taken over, but it is not her business to construct

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historical explanations or ideological apologias. And yet: even though this is not a book from which one will get anything like a full impression of what an extraordinarily vile age it really was, it is a curiously revealing book all the same. 'One may very well be in a story without understanding it,' the biblical Joseph, Thomas Mann's best beloved hero, observes on the last page of his story – to which Katja Mann, who is certainly *in* her story and not in any way above it, might reply that there is more than one kind of understanding. For though she may not know a social parameter from a reified superstructure when she sees one, her eye for the characteristic pomposities of the age is as clear as Thomas Mann's ever was.

Take the story she tells about the Lucky and Pozzo of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Studies *in partibus infidelium* in California. 'Tommy' is having his siesta, Theodor Adorno comes into the house through the garden, all dressed up in a dark suit, looking unspeakably solemn. What causes Dr Adorno's grave concern is that Thomas Mann has mentioned him in a recent book but without also mentioning Pozzo:

> I said, 'What do you mean? Herr Horkheimer is a dear friend, but he doesn't have anything at all to do with *The Story of a Novel* nor with *Dr Faustus*. The fact that *you* helped my husband has surely been fully documented.'
>
> But Wiesengrund-Adorno said, 'No, no, it's impossible. Horkheimer is going to be deeply offended.'
>
> I: 'Well, what shall we do then?'
>
> He: 'I see only one possibility – that your husband at least review Horkheimer's new book now, perhaps in the *New York Times*.'

The book, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, turned out to be by Horkheimer *and* Adorno; on receiving a copy, Thomas Mann handed it to his son Golo: 'I don't understand anything about this. Couldn't you write the review?' Which Golo proceeded to do, publishing it under Thomas Mann's name.

Katja shares the strange, slightly brassy charm of the German bourgeoisie of her day (and, come to think of it, of ours). She tells us that the Manns of Lübeck were 'somewhat anti-Semitic and conservative – that's the way it was in Germany'; she tells us that the Pringsheims of Berlin were rich whereas the Munich Pringsheims were rich and cultivated too, but she does not tell us that they were Jewish. Well – why should she? It was not a thing one mentioned in those days, if one belonged to 'society'. The horrors of the subsequent age have obscured the extent to which people like the Pringsheims *did* belong (or thought they belonged, which for them came to the same thing). But to the handsome old lady recording her memoirs, the inter-war era is much less real than the Munich of *la belle époque*.

And so it is all a happy story of charming and gifted people, of a happy marriage attended, like the Joseph story, by success in times of good fortune and adversity alike . . . Or was it? On the last page of *her* story Katja Mann remarks to her son, Golo, 'I just wanted to say, I have never in my life been able to do what I would have liked to do.' Which is as ironical as anything her husband ever wrote.

Valentine Cunningham

Wanzing Hardy

The Complete Poems by THOMAS HARDY edited by James Gibson *Macmillan* £6.50
Thomas Hardy: The Poetry of Perception by TOM PAULIN *Macmillan* £7.95
The Genius of Thomas Hardy edited by MARGARET DRABBLE *Weidenfeld* £5.50
Thomas Hardy: An Illustrated Biography by TIMOTHY O'SULLIVAN *Macmillan* £6.50
The Wormwood Cup: Thomas Hardy in Cornwall by KENNETH PHELPS *Lodenek Press, Padstow* £3.75
Thomas Hardy: The Forms of Tragedy by DALE KRAMER *Macmillan* £7.95

Primary sources first. And unstinted praise to Macmillan, and to James Gibson, for Hardy's *Complete Poems*. In the run-up to 1978 when, of course, their copyrights expire, Macmillan have looked rather dubiously set on the grand slam, with their new editions of Hardy's novels, new introductions to Hardy novels in paperback, edited selections of the poems and numerous critical studies – a commanding and commandeering of the Hardy market, especially the ever-eager student market, that's occasionally seemed less than commendable, in particular since some of the critical books have been and, on the evidence of the dreadful Dale Kramer, some of them continue to be, fairly tawdry stuff.

But the *Complete Poems* is indubitably of great value and, what's more, extraordinarily cheap at the price. No need any longer to soldier on with our old faithful, the *Collected Poems* of 1930 – its type-faces nicked and dented, its plates quite literally worn out by the continual reprintings of almost fifty years in the noble (and clearly continuing) endeavour of keeping that bulky hoard of nearly a thousand poems available (as Hardy willed it) 'at a reasonable price so as to be within the reach of poorer readers'. At last you can read a Hardy whose words are *all there*. The poems have been numbered for easier reference (though their lines still haven't, so following up the textual note to, say, line 117 of 'Leipzig' can give you considerable pause). Errors that had crept into *Collected Poems* and occasionally made Hardy's verse look more disproportioningly odd than he intended ('sloe-back eyes' in 'The Sacrilege', for instance, instead of the rightful 'sloe-black' ones), have been weeded out. And, justifying the new edition's claim to completeness, 27 previously uncollected poems have been added. Some of these verses are, expectably enough, not unfamiliar, including six extracts from *The Dynasts* that Hardy himself honoured as separate poems, and some pieces first published in *London Magazine* in 1956. But some are new to print, not least the spryly hostile 'Epitaphs' on Chesterton and George Moore, said by Florence Hardy to have been dictated on the author's death-bed (a pretty busy site if you believe all the wifely reports of things he said and had read to him on it).

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Above all, though, there are at long last some textual notes.

Not unbefittingly, perhaps, for an author whose texts were constantly meddled with by others, Hardy was himself an assiduous meddler with his own words. On the manuscript page, in the passages between journal and book, between editions, he eschewed few chances of worrying away at his poems. And how surprisingly little have critics and, more curiously, the editors of selections, bothered with these revealing variants. But here, thanks to James Gibson, we can follow Hardy having third and fourth thoughts about 'Thoughts of Phena'; which began more or less openly in the MS as 'T------a/ At news of her death', but later appeared more cagily varied as 'Thoughts of Ph---a . . .', and 'At News of a Woman's Death'. Or Hardy having trouble with bowdlers ('Her cold little buzzom half naked he views' was much too strong a sight for the *Gentleman's Magazine* which gave readers of 'Bride-Night Fire' only 'Her form in these cold mildewed tatters'). Or Hardy indicating what famous and inevitable-sounding lines narrowly escaped being ('Afterwards' once began much less tremulously with 'When night has closed its shutters on my dismantled day.'). Or, most notably, Hardy busily working up his notorious verbal oddities, his archaisms and dialecticisms, a considerable number of which appear to have got in only as deliberated afterthoughts. 'Wanzing weak' (in 'He Revisits His First School') displaces the prosaic 'growing weak'; 'dissolved to wan wistlessness' (in 'The Voice') was originally the clearer (and better) 'consigned to existlessness'; 'my bell of quittance' (in 'Afterwards') began as a quite ordinary 'parting bell'. And so on: not, to be sure, in relation to so many texts, all that many textual notes, but enough to be going on with after the many years of none at all. And if these tantalising little foretastes are anything to go by, then the Variorum Edition James Gibson is currently compiling will be an instructive treasure. Meanwhile, gratified thanks to him and his publisher, for these not so small mercies.

And after a good stop-gap text of the poems, that almost as little to be anticipated bonus, an illuminating discussion about them. If the verb 'to be' dominates Wordsworth, it's the language of seeing that predominates in Hardy's poetry, and Tom Paulin, in a striking, original and energetically kept-up discussion inspects the matter of sight in Hardy's poems in the light of their author's continuing and earnest interest in the theories and practicalities of perception. Naturally Hume, Shelley and Ruskin, each of whom was occupied with ways of seeing, and whom Hardy read, annotated and learned from, figure largely. Paulin makes us take Hardy's 'impressionist' claims (his 'impression pictures' and 'mere impressions of the moment') literally. He's full of fascinating detail, about the Victorian discussion of the nature and development of the eye and whether they proved there's a Creator, about Hardy's interest in profiles (Mill's and Prince Napoleon's), cameos and faces, about his fascination for postcards and magic lanterns, and 'eidetic images' generally, about his habits of observation at music-halls and police-courts and in the National Gallery. The connections Paulin keeps forcing – between Ruskin's account of the Gothic mode and Hardy and Browning's poetry; between Hardy and A. R. Luria's *The Mind of a Mnemonist*, or Hardy and Bradley Headstone (both their minds a 'junk heap of impressions') – are continually compelling and instructive. I learned a lot. Not that there aren't also a couple of simply ragbaggy chapters (which read like the sweepings of the original thesis), and some loonier moments where unchecked ingenuity spots a concrete poem here, Skeltonics there, or even professes to hear in 'Dead "Wessex" the Dog . . .', the tune of 'She'll be coming down the mountain'. Furthermore, I'm not in fact convinced that Hardy transcends positivism in just the way and in just the poems that Paulin takes a lot of trouble to argue. But Paulin's brief for the visionary Hardy is never less than interesting, and it does make a refreshing change to have a strong case put for *Moments of Vision* (as opposed to *Poems 1912-1913*) as the best Hardy volume.

Above all, perhaps, Paulin makes one take Hardy seriously as the thinker who comfortably and skilfully consorted with Darwin and Mill, Newman and Leslie Stephen. His book makes a necessary corrective to A. O. J. Cockshut's thin (and sceptical)

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reflections on 'Hardy's Philosophy' in the Margaret Drabble volume. It should also help sink the hardy canard about 'autodidacticism'. Timothy O'Sullivan's workmanlike text refers accurately to Hardy's training in Latin at Dorchester British School and to his 'formidable reading programme' in Westbourne Park Villas, but still parrots on about his 'little more than basic education' and 'a certain parrotry of allusions and references'. Parrots, of course, never compile their own reading lists, let alone teach themselves. And if Hardy was an autodidact, so are my undergraduates, so am I and, even more so (to take an author J. I. M. Stewart compares with Hardy in the Drabble volume), so was Virginia Woolf. But she, who shared Hardy's 'autodidactic' suspicion of the novel, is never sneered at as 'self-taught'. It is no longer any good, as Paulin proves, to think of Hardy simply as the rural buffer of Virginia Woolf's visit (and Siegfried Sassoon's sonnet 'At Max Gate'), stroking the dog and refusing to be intellectual – a man who had somehow managed to scrape through a few books that by rights should have gone straight over his head, and probably did.

There is, of course, a Gaffer Hardy aspect to the writing, rooted in real places and about real people: the Hardy aptly celebrated by Hermann Lea and the originals-spotter industry that bears not ignoble fruit in the terrific photographs in Margaret Drabble's and O'Sullivan's books and in the enthusiasms of ur-critical amateurs such as Kenneth Phelps. The enthusiasm remains a decent business, though professionals like A. L. Rowse (who also treats of Hardy's Cornwall) should do better things with it ('He was one who used to notice such things,' he unnoticingly misquotes). And there have been nice items to glean from the gossips, as many of Drabble's contributors prove in using the testimonies about Hardy's stinginess, lustfulness, and so forth, garnered by James Stevens Cox.

But criticism is more than providing simple touristic yarns for the charabanc trade and, on the whole, the Drabble gang attempts little more than that. If the contributors have the will to be more serious (and John Betjeman and David Cecil appear not to) they haven't the space. Even the eloquent Lois Deacon's argument for Tryphena is reduced to a ludicrously unconvincing pastiche of its usual self. Still, out of a cramping formula comes forth occasional strength, most notably J. I. M. Stewart's stylishly written piece on the novels. Its few pages put the Kramer tome quite to shame. By utter contrast, Kramer's critical mincing-machine moves about as stylishly as a collective poem; he defines tragedy without referring to any tragedies; his discussions rarely tangle with the books one remembers reading, and even his reduction of *Far from the Madding Crowd* to a footer formation (a '2-3-4-3-2 progression of character relationships') turns out to be secondhand.

SHARING INFLATION?

Poverty Report 1976

Edited by PETER WILLMOTT

How have the poor fared under inflation and under the government's policies for dealing with it? This year's 'Poverty Report' from the Institute of Community Studies examines this fundamental question of social policy. It also looks at the poor in the third world and compares research on deprivation in Paris and London. (£2.25 paperback, £4.50 cased)

maurice temple smith

Russell Davies

Splinter Groups

The Rabbi's Wife by DAVID BENEDICTUS *Blond & Briggs* £3.50
Harry Bleachbaker by N. F. SIMPSON *Harrap* £2.95
Lost Profile by FRANÇOISE SAGAN *Deutsch* £2.75
String Horses by URSULA HOLDEN *London Magazine Editions* £3.75
The Virgins by JILLIAN BECKER *Gollancz* £3.50
The Unwanted by CHRISTIAAN BARNARD and SIEGFRIED STANDER *Hutchinson* £3.95
Good Samaritan by JOHN O'HARA *Hodder & Stoughton* £3.95

Must the shocks and messes of the developing world always be reduced to a white little pile of papers under Angela Rippon's thumb? The British novelist's struggle for involvement goes on. Sorry I am to say it nought availeth, but it very largely doth.

The new novel by David Benedictus makes one of the boldest forced entries of recent times into the world of the blood-stained newsreel, from a starting point somewhere in Blackheath. Susannah, young wife of Rabbi Jamie Arnatt, is discovered in the kind of housebound slough where, I suppose, most British novels are written, never mind read. Attempting to dial-a-poem, she finds the service out of order, and makes do with a ginger nut and a glance at the *Guardian*. But Relevance is massing its forces in the Welsh hills, under Arab guise; and within 20 pages, on the Day of Atonement, a strike-force of Palestinian guerrillas has invaded the Blackheath Synagogue, captured Susannah and her Young People's study class, and begun shooting child hostages on a balcony.

For a time, flatly proffered violence grinds in the seriousness of Mr Benedictus's theme ('Patricia flew through the air, and landed with such a crash on the tarmac', etc.); but when Susannah, the last hostage, is helicoptered away to a camp outside Beirut, the narrative is suddenly diffuse, and tottering. Susannah resignedly submits to a series of rapes; Jamie, left at home, and deceived by a propaganda photo into believing his wife has defected to the enemy, goes rapidly downhill, soon capable only of playing erratic chess with Jethro, a swotty survivor of the Blackheath holocaust. Very much on the pathetic end of things. Jamie doesn't yet know that an alien child is developing in the womb he has revealingly failed to make fruitful. Whatever their faults, these terrorists make virility count; their closeness to real suffering makes them efficient regenerators of life, as well as extinguishers of it.

The book is dedicated to the murdered athletes of Munich 1972, and equally to the Palestinian refugees 'who live on': a sense of balance that Mr Benedictus brandishes rather than brings alive. The birth of Susannah's daughter, after the inevitable return to the dial-a-poem society, gives the Arnatts a problem to be getting on with, ideologically – a kind of investment project in enforced Middle East cooperation – but it is hard to be honestly moved by such programmed tokenism. The author could have made it easier by not populating his margins with Ealing comedy grotesques, particularly the diplomats; to make everyone who isn't part of The Problem simply lightweight is a nervous and humourless tactic not unrelated to the breast-beating that Mr Benedictus is deploring in Jamie. The public certainly wants to see these events absorbed by the fiction world, but I doubt whether this book will long remain the best attempt on the market to interpret them.

A novel by N. F. Simpson ought to come as a relief after this, and indeed *Harry Bleachbaker* fully intends to do so, as can be judged by the huge anti-blurb's assertion that the book is 'not only unenlivened by a single spark of genuine inspiration from beginning to end, but is overwritten' and 'calculated to produce the maximum bafflement and irritation'. Despite the success of the latter strategy, I fought through to the end, and to the deduction that Mr Simpson sees 'involvement' as too much to hope for. His book, file or dossier concerns one Albert Whitbrace, who falls into the sea and spends 27½ months there while the world debates what kind of treatment his case requires and merits.

Among the parties interested are an organisation devoted to Sympathising with any victim of catastrophe, anywhere, and a bizarre splinter-group bent on actually pulling Mr Whitbrace out of the water – a plan that naturally fails when they sink him for good and all with a blow to the head from a lifebelt. A serious feeling of inadequacy to our daily task of absorbing news of disaster underlies this exercise, but at some vast depth below a deadpan surface veneered with minute-taking-ese, and inlaid with chop-logic. Whimsy I have seen, but this is my first experience of Whimserama. Ignore the title-character: he's just a bloke standing on an ice-floe minding somebody's kite, and possibly waiting for his creator to form a government.

Women, fortunately, are still prepared to commit themselves to the traditional intimacy of personal experience. One's eye was inevitably drawn to the name of Françoise Sagan, but after *Lost Profile*, never again. This is a really wet little fictionette, in which a girl scooped out of a debilitating

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marriage by a millionaire called Julius A. Cram has her career masterminded by him more thoroughly than she would like, and ends up saying, 'It's over.' I kept wishing that the translator, Joanna Kilmartin, whom I happen to know to be capable of writing a far better novel herself, had spent the time doing just that.

Similarly short, but far less trite, are the novels by Ursula Holden and Jillian Becker, who have both braved the blushes of total recall to re-examine the puberty question. Ms Holden's is slightly the more forced work; she too has made certain we respect her central pair of figures (schoolgirl sisters Joanna and Hope, the pretty one) by setting them among gargoyles – a dotty headmistress called Miss Delicate, a Cockney Ma from the days of the Huggetts, and two very plummy-voiced dwarfs called 'the gents'. A sense of the mad, disproportionate teenage self-absorption is the aim, and for long stretches Ms Holden achieves it. The experimental insults exchanged by the girls are strangely charming ('you prat-faced les'), and Hope's seduction by the gypsy janitor Mallory, though unexplicit, is as dirty as his boiler-room. But somehow the changes of location don't come off, and gosh, the final shift to Ireland, adulthood and tragedy couldn't have worked under any circs.

In the matter of location, Ms Becker has the advantage, being South African by birth and schooling. Her schoolgirl heroine, Annie Firman, daughter of a 'liberal' Johannesburg father (NS reader, too) and illiberal Fanny, does little more than nourish a pash for worthless photographer Marcus Vine, then dabble gingerly in sex-on-the-rebound with a devoted coloured boy, Edward. But within that little space, a whole child's garden of social nuance is most tidily cultivated.

Small blooms, but healthier than the rank hothouse growths of *The Unwanted*, the Christiaan Barnard Conscience Show scripted by Siegfried Stander. This story of a heart surgeon, from 'You've got a good pair of hands there, my boy' to a professorship, takes welcome exception to feudalities like apartheid taxis and apartheid Intensive Care units – as indeed it should, for who better than Barnard to know that we're all brothers under the skin? But as an imaginative experience it ranks with the TV swab-operas, all squirting arteries and abortion and backstage snarling at the operating theatre. Suture taste?

One weakness common to all these books – it's conquered only by Mses Holden and Becker in their wodges of schoolgirl banter – is the shortage of really relishable dialogue. Even a reader with no stage talent at all, I'm willing to bet, has an inner ear that is a wonderful actor. The stuff this lurking Barrymore needs is to be found at last in *Good Samaritan*, a posthumous round-up of John O'Hara's short stories. O'Hara may have been a coarse-grained old cynic with only a few restricted lines in small-town dynasties, country-club hypocrites, Hollywood bitches and cheating wives, but his talent for speech takes you whiffling through 300 petty-scandalous pages at express pace, leaving Inner Ear panting for his Oscar.

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Philip French

US and Them

1876 by GORE VIDAL *Heinemann* £4.10

In the year of the bicentennial celebrations Gore Vidal has produced another historical novel, quite as large, but altogether denser and bleaker than either *Burr* or *Washington D.C.*: *1876* is the centrepiece of the trilogy that traces America's history from its break from the British Empire to the time it became an imperial power itself.

As the trilogy has progressed Vidal's ambitions have grown and the technical problems he has set himself have become increasingly formidable. *Washington D.C.*, published in 1967, is a conventional third-person narrative covering life in the capital from Roosevelt's second term in the late Thirties to the accession of Eisenhower and the peak of McCarthyism in the early Fifties. All the major characters are inventions, while the historical personages hover off-stage. *Burr* is told in the first person by the fictitious young New York journalist Charlie Schuyler who is surrounded largely by genuine historical figures. He not only reports on American politics in the 1830s but also acts as mediator for Aaron Burr's highly personal recollections of the first 50 years of the Republic. The novel ends with Charlie's discovery that, like the newly elected eighth President Martin Van Buren, he is an illegitimate son of Burr.

In *1876* Charlie is again the narrator. He's now 62, a widower with a considerable reputation as a political journalist and historian who's been living in Europe for nearly four decades. His small fortune having been wiped out in the financial panic of the early 1870s, he returns to America accompanied by his daughter, widow of a French prince. He plans to recoup through her marriage into the New York aristocracy and the anticipated patronage of New York governor Samuel Tilden, a reforming Democrat expected to succeed President Grant in the White House and clean up the gross corruption in Washington. The novel purports to be Schuyler's journal from his arrival in December 1875 through to early 1877, when he's working up these notes into a book about an election that had proved one of the greatest debacles in American history. The only fictional characters in *1876* are Charlie, his daughter, and a handful of their friends.

Unlike *Washington D.C.*, *1876* has a totally unfamiliar political context and an inflexible *dramatis personae*. Unlike *Burr*, it has no charismatic central character to seize our imagination, no broad historical sweep, and no immediately identifiable public figures such as Washington and Jefferson to be Stracheyfied. President Grant, future Presidents Rutherford B. Hayes, James Garfield and Chester Arthur, are not names that create strong mental images. So all of Vidal's considerable craft, wit, political insight, elegance and irony is called into play. Unfortunately some of the material here is intractable and many readers will feel that he has overestimated their potential interest in American history of a century ago. They will notice, of course, obvious parallels between past and present, but often they will react as the bewildered Schuyler does when trying to follow a conversation between political insiders: 'I tried to look intelligent but had no idea what they were talking about.' At such sticky points one should press on because, for all its occasional longueurs and feeling of strain, *1876* is a rewarding and accomplished book.

In formal terms it is certainly a success. The journalistic assignments from the octogenarian poet W. C. Bryant, editor of the *New York Post*, and the brash young proprietor of the *New York Herald*, James Gordon Bennett, plausibly explain Charlie's presence in Washington to observe the scandals of the Grant regime and his attendance at the centennial exhibition at Philadelphia. His long absence in Europe makes him an unusually observant commentator on social change and local manners – he notes the developing accent, the preoccupation with technology (a fellow dinner guest Fanny Kemble enthuses over her typewriter), the hotels with their fancy plumbing and lifts (or 'perpendicular railways'), the former Civil War officers clinging to their titles and the unemployed ex-soldiers forming bands of marauding beggars in the cities. Vidal creates a richly detailed picture of New York, with its palatial mansions going up on Fifth Avenue while goats still wander in Madison Square, and an equally vivid one of 'Washington City', the 'African' town where everything is for sale and no one seems to wash.

Equally plausibly Charlie's social aspirations bring him into contact with the new aristocracy (or 'Astorocracy') and his literary pursuits lead to meetings with Henry James and Mark Twain, a 'professional vulgarian' whose work he loathes while finding the man himself a victim of his times. But Charlie Schuyler is far more than a mere narrative convenience – or inconvenience. This friend of Turgenev and the Goncourts hasn't just come home to patronise his fellow Americans, to expose their brashness and hypocrisy. He is a complex, vain and troubled man, a despairing patriot; continually he sees small moral gains obliterated by massive defeats, yet he lives with the hope that reason and unsanctimonious goodness may prevail. Unfortunately he cannot believe that they will:

> If Governor Tilden has a fatal flaw, it is his curious notion that men can be compelled by good argument to be honest, to show disinterest where there is only interest and greed.

The heroes of this trilogy are decent men whose private profligacy never affects their public probity; they eventually fail because, although prepared to bend, they cannot make the final fatal compromise that would put them on the same level as their opponents. At the end of *Washington D.C.*, the young Peter Sandford, the last link in the chain from Aaron Burr to the present, reflects:

> He knew that what he really wanted was to know what was good, and since he could accept no absolutes he could do little more than resist what appeared to him to be altogether bad, aware that the moment he had ceased to say 'no' he would sink like Aeneas to Clay's level, which was: does it work or not, does one rise or fall?

Vidal's trilogy began with a traditional political novel about a period that has since become history. It proceeded in *Burr* to bring history into question. It concludes with *1876* in which there is a direct debate about history and fiction between the narrator, James Garfield and the Bulgarian Ambassador, Baron Jacobi. The classicist Garfield believes in the possibility of objective history. Schuyler weighs the problems of writing reliable history while being suspicious of historical fiction. Jacobi comes firmly down on the side of the novel. 'I prefer fiction to history,' he says, and addresses Garfield thus:

> I think, General, the answer to that is very simple. We *cannot* know any history, truly. I suppose somewhere, in heaven perhaps, there is a platonic history of the world, a precise true record. But what we think to be history is nothing but fiction. Isn't that so, Mr Schuyler? I appeal to you perversely, since you are a historian.

But Schuyler is a historian invented by Gore Vidal, and Jacobi is a charming diplomat created by Henry Adams in his novel *Democracy*, actually written in the 1870s. What better advocates could fiction have to argue its case against the future 20th President of the United States?

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Selected Spring and Summer Books

The books listed below are a selection from those which publishers hope to issue between now and mid-September. Titles announced in earlier lists which are now due in this period are not included. Some prices are provisional, some are not yet known.

Art, Architecture and Design

JAN BIALOSTOCKI: The Art of the Renaissance in Eastern Europe *Phaidon* £12.50
KENNETH CLARK: Landscape into Art *Murray* £9.50
GEOFFREY GRIGSON: The Goddess of Love *Constable* £7.00
BEVIS HILLIER: Travel Posters *Phaidon* £4.50
EDWARD JOHNSON: Francis Cotes *Phaidon* £15.00
CHARLES F. KLAPPER: London's Lost Railways *Routledge* £5.50
PATRICK NUTTGENS: York: The Continuing City *Faber* £8.50
GODFREY RUBENS: William Lethaby: His Life and Work 1857-1931 *Architectural Press* £10.00
C. V. WEDGWOOD: The Political Career of Peter Paul Rubens *Thames & Hudson* £3.00

Autobiography and Letters

MICHAEL ARLEN: Passage to Ararat *Chatto* £4.75
MAURICE COLLIS (Louise Collis ed.): Diaries 1949-1969 *Heinemann* £4.90
JOHN CORNFORD: Selected Writings *Carcanet* £3.90
WOLF VON ECKARDT and SANDER L. GILMAN: Bertolt Brecht's Berlin: A Scrapbook of the Twenties *Abelard-Schuman*
ANTHONY EDEN: Another World 1897-1917 *Allen Lane* £3.95
LILLIAN HELLMAN: Scoundrel Time *Macmillan* £4.95
CHRISTOPHER HOLLIS: Oxford in the Twenties *Heinemann* £4.75
PABLO NERUDA: Memoirs *Souvenir* £4.50 and £2.50
EDNA O'BRIEN: Mother Ireland *Weidenfeld* £4.25
SYLVIA PLATH: Letters Home *Faber* £6.75
ARTHUR RANSOME: (Rupert Hart-Davis ed.): Autobiography *Cape* £5.50
FREYA STARK: A Peak in Darien *Murray* £3.50
LORD WOLFENDEN: Turning Points *Bodley Head* £4.00

Biography

JOHN BIRD: Percy Grainger *Elek* £7.50
ELIZABETH FRENCH BOYD: Bloomsbury Heritage: Their Mothers and their Aunts *Hamish Hamilton* £5.25
ALUN CHALFONT: The Field Marshal: Montgomery of Alamein *Weidenfeld* £6.50
TONY CLIFF: Lenin Vol. II: All Power to the Soviets *Pluto* £6.60 and £3.60
SANDRA JOBSON DARROCH: The Life of Lady Ottoline Morrell *Chatto* £6.50
GILLIAN FREEMAN: The Schoolgirl Ethic: The Life and Work of Angela Brazil *Allen Lane* £4.50
WINIFRED GERIN: Elizabeth Gaskell *Oxford* £5.75
RONALD HINGLEY: A New Life of Anton Chekhov *Oxford* £8.75
JOHN E. MACK: A Prince of Our Disorder: The Life of T. E. Lawrence *Weidenfeld* £5.95
DAPHNE DU MAURIER: The Winding Stair: Francis Bacon, His Rise and Fall *Gollancz* £6.00
NICHOLAS MOSLEY: Julian Grenfell: His Life and the Times of His Death 1889-1915 *Weidenfeld* £5.95
MARTIN GILBERT: Winston S. Churchill: Companion Vol. IV *Heinemann*
MERVYN HORDER (ed.): Ronald Firbank: Memoirs and Critiques *Duckworth* £5.00
H. MONTGOMERY HYDE: Oscar Wilde *Eyre Methuen* £6.95
SAMUEL HYNES: The Auden Generation *Bodley Head* £5.00
ROBERT RHODES JAMES: Victor Cazalet: A Portrait *Hamish Hamilton* £5.95
RUTH JORDAN: George Sand *Constable* £5.00
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FRANK MACSHANE: The Life of Raymond Chandler *Cape* £5.50
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JOHN WATNEY: Mervyn Peake *Michael Joseph* £5.50
KENNETH YOUNG: Stanley Baldwin *Weidenfeld* £4.50

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JOHN BARNES: Beginnings of Cinema in England *David & Charles* £6.95
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JOHN BAXTER: The Hollywood Exiles *Macdonald & Jane's* £4.95
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MICHAEL PATTERSON: German Theatre Today *Pitman* £3.30 and £1.95
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NORMAN SWALLOW: Eisenstein: A Documentary Portrait *Allen & Unwin* £5.50 and £2.95
ERIK TAWASTSTJERNA (trans. Robert Layton): Sibelius Vol. I *Faber* £12.50
JACQUES VASSAL (trans. Paul Barnett): Electric Children: Roots and Branches of Modern Folkrock *Muller* £7.50

Fiction

BRIAN ALDISS: The Malacia Tapestry *Cape* £3.50
JAMES BALDWIN: Little Man, Little Man *Michael Joseph* £2.50
PETER BENCHLEY: The Deep *Deutsch* £3.25
CHAIM BERMANT: The Second Mrs Whitberg *Allen & Unwin* £4.95
CAROLINE BLACKWOOD: The Stepdaughter *Duckworth* £2.95
MALCOLM BRADBURY: Who do You Think You Are? *Secker & Warburg*
JOHN BRAINE: Waiting for Sheila *Eyre Methuen* £3.50
DINAH BROOKE: Games of Love and War *Cape* £3.50
CHRISTY BROWN: Wild Grow the Lilies *Secker & Warburg* £3.90
GEORGE MACKAY BROWN: The Sun's Net *Chatto* £3.75
PHILIP CALLOW: The Story of My Desire *Bodley Head* £3.50
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Theatre

Benedict Nightingale

National Pride

Nearly 40 years ago Bernard Shaw turned a ceremonial sod in South Kensington, remarking, with his usual consistency, 'I hope no one will be so foolish as actually to *build* a National Theatre on this site.' As the world knows, no one was that foolish. Instead of plumping our number-one playhouse down among shops, pubs, cafés, hotels, museums, houses and passers-by, we've stuck it on the south side of the dreariest bridge in London, just beside a disintegrating depot belonging to the *Daily Mail*. Those who arrive by tube or BR must go to the roundabout outside Waterloo, down and across a wilderness of concrete stairs, pillars and walls, up by the neon sign marked 'toilets', and just ahead they'll see what might be a prison, might be a warehouse or, given the lack of windows on its rectangular grey, might be a top-secret establishment for research into germ warfare. It seems wiser to come by car, park upriver, and walk along the deserted promenade past the carved pumice of the Queen Elizabeth Hall. That way, you'll at least approach the front of the new National Theatre, even if you'll still lack the perspective to get a complete impression of it.

This is not, repeat not, yet another display of post-hoc spitefulness directed at our latest national asset. It's rather an appeal to the GLC, the South Bank Board and any other relevant party to *do* something, even if only to form a working party to discover what's happened to all the other working parties that should already have transformed the awful desolation of this area. The new National Theatre, its silvery balconies capped by towers, looks very captivating from the north of the Thames. And once you've stepped past those beetling windows, into the cultural Oz itself, you'll probably be captivated. With its low, honeycombed ceilings, rough pillars and pockets of light and shade, it might be someone's strange but successful attempt to convert a medieval monastery into a comfortable hotel. But the wasteland outside cries out for barrows, salesmen, tables, waiters, posters, paintings, booths, buskers, soap-box orators – anything alive and bustling, if only troupes of critics giving exhibition bouts of flyting, that ancient art of exchanging imaginative invective. Money would obviously not turn the South Bank into the Left Bank overnight, but it might provide a foundation and a start. If we can fork out £16 million for the building itself, we can surely spend a few thousands on the vacuum into which we've thrust it.

This isn't a trivial point. It is no use the posters telling us 'the new National Theatre is *yours*' if the environment is already undermining that assurance. If the place isn't to dwindle from an amusing novelty into a cultural ghetto, with taxis and limousines appearing out of the darkness at 7.15 and disappearing back into it at 10.00, it must exist in some human context. It must, as Peter Hall puts it, be 'dirtied up'. That means a lot of people in and around the building all day, and those people not entirely or mainly the kind one expects to find sprawled on theatre seats or draped across theatre bars. And *that* means that Hall must soon begin to fulfil his promise to use the foyers, rehearsal rooms and buffets for short plays, lunchtime jam sessions, recitals, talks, discussions. When warmer weather comes, there's no reason why such activities shouldn't spill out on to the pavement outside. The sight of Frank Finlay and Susan Fleetwood cavorting beside Old Father Thames might lure the office-workers from the Shell building and County Hall, and even sidetrack commuters on their way to Waterloo.

The National expects a subsidy of £2½ million, and may need even more if it turns out to have overestimated the box-office returns, as seems all too likely given its bizarre booking methods. But it cannot possibly justify such a sum unless it keeps very busy indeed, in and out of the three auditoria formally built into its structure. And that brings me to another of Hall's obligations and promises. His own company, however large and willing, cannot alone bring the theatre to life or fulfil its responsibility to the nation at large. So he must import groups from beyond London, beyond England, and beyond those less defined frontiers between the orthodox and the experimental. The proscenium-arch Lyttelton will presumably house the more conventional visitors but I, for one, will be watching to see whom Hall invites into his plain rectangular box, the Cottesloe. There, both stage and seating are sufficiently adaptable to assimilate the most anarchic of strolling players and least structured of plays. Sadly, this is also a back-door theatre, approached by a tradesman's entrance on the ugly left-hand side of the building. One of the many challenges facing the oppressed Hall will be to integrate its presumably younger, less orthodox audiences into the life of the National as a whole.

Well, that won't be until the summer: which is also the same, vague time we'll get the Olivier, a sort of updated amphitheatre, its rising arc of seats looking down on to a vast drum of a stage. I should probably wait until we see how this place works before passing judgment, but I cannot. Bluntly, it is the most exciting theatre I've yet encountered, and the mere sight of it, three-quarters finished, did much to reconcile me to the profligates who planned the National Theatre building and passed us the bill. If it failed quite to do so, it wasn't its fault but that of the Lyttelton, which is comfy, cosy and pretty ordinary: a fawn-coloured wedge facing an overblown picture frame. It is, I suppose, no worse than the new or newish theatres at Guildford, Farnham and Leatherhead, and rather better than the one at Birmingham, whose stage is so absurdly wide you almost have to hitchhike across it. The Lyttelton can at least narrow its proscenium arch when someone wants to stage a pocket-handkerchief play. But I don't see that it's otherwise a very remarkable addition to our cultural heritage.

A national theatre that consisted only of the Olivier, the Cottesloe and the odd foyer would be an adequate national theatre. But now we have the Lyttelton we must obviously make the best of it – as, indeed, Hall's company was doing last week. I saw three productions, and all worked reasonably well. The stage is deep as well as wide, which helped give size to *Hamlet* and surrounded Peggy Ashcroft, half-buried in slag for Beckett's *Happy Days*, with a handsome amount of symbolic darkness. The sightlines and acoustics go a fair way towards justifying the architect's boast that it's possible to catch a whisper or the twitch of an eyelid wherever you sit. I can't speak for row R, but we in J missed none of Dame Peggy's eloquently bleak stares and tiny, crumpled smiles. We heard everyone, too: everyone, that is, except Albert Finney, many of whose emphases have become distinctly odd, his syllables scrambled or dropped, since we first saw his sweet prince. Polonius, for instance, is dismissed as a 'wretched, rash intrudingful', whatever that is, and the play ends with a bewildering prophecy: 'the rest is Silas.'

No theatre can correct slovenly diction, and we must hope Finney puts in some hard slog on his voicebox before *Hamlet* moves into the auditorium that would suit it best, the Olivier. That would also be the proper setting for Hall's resonant and poetic production of *John Gabriel Borkman*. This was the event of the week. Dame Peggy's Ella, too serene at the Old Vic last year, has become tougher and more aggressive, and Wendy Hiller's Gunhild, smirking in satisfaction at a world that never fails to let her down, is at least as good as before. But the marvel is Ralph Richardson, an actor whose blearier trumpetings have sometimes inclined critics to dismiss him as a ham: in Kenneth Tynan's phrase, 'the glass eye in the forehead of the British theatre'. When he stalks off into the Norwegian snow in his hat and cape he does indeed look like some disintegrating 19th-century actor-manager – and yet who but he could inject so much wonder and mystery into Borkman's valediction to the mountains and valleys? Who else could bring the part so richly to life?

Yes, it is important to humanise the new theatre's surroundings. Yes, it's important to make it buzz, day and night. But what finally matters is the quality of the experiences fed us there. If many future performances prove as striking as Richardson's white-maned visionary, the National Theatre won't have been built in vain.

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Films

John Coleman

Sylvan

Poachers *Academy One*
The Man Who Fell to Earth *Leicester Square Theatre*
Butley *Curzon*

'Furtivos' is apparently the Spanish for poachers. Jose Luis Borau's film is, in fact, anything but furtive: an astonishingly head-on account of corruption in high and low places. A meek-faced fellow, Angel (Ovidi Montllor), lands in his local town to buy wire and cartridges. Police are about, tipped off that a romantic bandit, El Cuqui, is prowling. A plain girl, escaped from a reformatory, catches the gentle poacher's eye; he buys her a frock in the market; he shields her as she dons it in a doorway. Everything is animal and simple, or so one is persuaded. For the price of the dress, they bed in a hotel; somehow it emerges that she is the bandit's girl; on a mutual whim, Angel shoves her into the bus back to the country. He is already late for a rendezvous with bigwigs, come a-hunting at his mother's tavern. Mother is a wrinkled drinker (Lola Gaos of Buñuel's *Viridiana* and *Tristana*) and takes unkindly to the imported, insolent girl. The fussy leader of the hunting men from town is the Provincial Governor and, long ago, she was his nanny. The film establishes itself in such straight, yet dream-like terms: one brutal fact after another.

Unsurprisingly, it ran into trouble in its home country. There are domestic subtleties (Franco's observation: 'Spain is a peaceful forest' wickedly echoed in the sylvan environment, bristling with traps) likely to be lost to tourists. But the film won the Grand Prix at the San Sebastian Festival, creating an awkwardness, and hence we have it. It is superbly photographed by Luis Cuadrado, who much more fancily shot *Spirit of the Beehive*, and here scrawls pictures of twigs, racing deer, markets, men in land-rovers. It is black and funny.

'Are you Lithuanian?' – 'No, I come from England': at one crazed instant during Nicolas Roeg's latest film, financed by British Lion and thus a weird one-off, Paul Mayersberg wrote this exchange. Alas. *The Man Who Fell To Earth* is one of those movies you could see 19 times and still miss the meaning of, 20 times round. It is sick with *chic*. Once upon a book, there was an American novel of the same name. Add to this a pop star, David Bowie, lipsticked and eyelined to the hilt; send him from another planet; cut, cut, cut from one astounding image to the next; insert sex, flashing so fast you are not sure you saw your penis from your elbow; try to tell the plot. Mr Roeg, who constructed *Performance*, which also used a liver-lipped singer – Mick Jagger – as counterpoint to gangsters, is concerned to spell out the history of civilisation as we know it. He has his Bowie looking at seven TV screens, subsequently a dozen. He is, one could say, a Roeg male.

The movie operates around a creature from outer space. Interesting people like Buck Henry, a scriptwriter in his own write, now become actor, pass by. He is a patent lawyer, given an impressive mass of scribble by the Bowie-thing. The Bowie-thing, it should be said, has grey memories of plastic people – a family crumpled by a cottage-loaf of a spaceship that brought laughs from the full house at the press show. It is extremely hard not to say how dire, albeit drastically handsome, this olio is.

Butley is the first of seven filmed plays, each to have a two-week run at the Curzon. Alan Bates figures as the Ben Butley of the title, his words donated by Simon Gray, and he makes a right brilliant meal of them. Harold Pinter directed. Bates is strenuously amusing, a don devoted to T. S. Eliot; he has had a very bad day; his slummy quarters embrace a wife asking for a divorce, a homosexual chum about to leave him, a complexity of chances for him to nasally rail at. As an opportunity for Mr Bates to master language, it is OK: elsewhere, it is a disappointment.

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Art

Robert Melville

New Look

Picasso by TIMOTHY HILTON *Thames & Hudson* £4.50

I doubt if my voice will reach to the other side of the generation gap, but I would like to warn young readers of Tim Hilton's new introduction to Picasso that although it is illustrated by 200 well-known works, his antipathy to all the post-Cubist things – it amounts almost to an allergy – leads him at times to omit examples that might look too impressive; the painting, for instance of two giantesses thundering across the beach, or the astonishing still life of a plaster head and a bowl of fruit which brings to mind Salome dancing before Herod, or the fantastically lovely paraphrase of a Cranach *Standing Venus*.

Hilton himself is only 35. One doesn't expect him to share the consternation or enthusiasm of those critics who were confronted by Picasso's inventions as they emerged, but since he is claiming that every generation has its own view of Picasso it is somewhat surprising that his critical reassessment of the post-Cubist work echoes the cat-calls of a much older generation of American art critics which was engaged in the promotion of Abstract Expressionism. At the time, the idea was that Jackson Pollock's drip paintings made it impos-

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sible for a major contribution to painting ever to arise again from the treatment of the human figure; and because Pollock had been influenced by Picasso right up to the moment when there was only paint on his canvas, it became clear that Picasso's return to the figure after the Cubist collages of 1914 had been the stumbling block that delayed American supremacy. It all sounds particularly nonsensical now that we have seen the great American take-over peter out and turn by sheer attrition into 120 firebricks. But Hilton remains adamant: Picasso's hostility to abstract art was 'obtuse'.

It has to be admitted that Hilton's own hostile approach gives him a sharp eye for Picasso's weaknesses. He pounces on the picture of a guitar made out of paint, floorcloth, pasted paper and string, with nails driven into the back to face the spectator with their points. It was an anti-art gesture for which Hilton finds the correct precedent in Man Ray's *Gift* of 1921, a flatiron studded with tacks glued to its ironing surface, much admired by the Surrealists and almost certainly in one of their two shows in 1926, the year in which Picasso fabricated *Guitar*. 'It is hardly worth lingering on this sour work,' says Hilton loftily, as if he has sat on it and felt the nails in his behind. He is more circumspect when he deals with the large painting called *The Studio*, painted 1927-28. It depicts the artist depicting a still life and is in flat colours and sharply angled shapes throughout. Hilton treats it a little too tenderly, probably because in its unconsciously comic, rather foolish way it is quite close to an abstract, but he is quite right to pronounce it an 'outrageously magisterial' attempt to outpaint Mondrian, intended as a demonstration that 'there was no kind of art of any merit that Picasso could not swallow and make his own'. Well, Mondrian defeated him. The picture will always look trivial compared with any good Mondrian.

Hilton's detailed examination of the work from 1900 to 1914 occupies half the book. As one might expect, the chapter on Cubism is a strikingly intimate and lucid study of an art form almost as incomprehensible to the common man as alchemy; he perceives its subtle illegibilities as a release from the role of the artist as talented observer, and is critical only of Picasso's persistent and I suppose 'obtuse' attempts to find a Cubist way of dealing with the expressiveness of the human face.

He is not in sympathy with the blue period, but gives it a fair and vivid account. He considers the famous etching *The Frugal Meal* to be the Manneristic climax, 'a blue period masterpiece that paradoxically contains no blue at all'. From the rose period he singles out *The Two Brothers* for an enthusiastic and unusual interpretation:

> The Symbolists were too literary, and were quite without the pictorial power needed to produce such a tremendous image as this: so frank, so explicitly of a naked adolescent boy carrying a child on his back, and yet primevally mysterious. The picture is a deliberate correction of much that went wrong in the Symbolism-influenced blue period. Its immediate ancestry in Picasso's art is clear of course. But the familial themes of previous paintings, of circus folk and their kin . . . are now so much stripped of their civilised resonances that we seem not just to be in an Adamic or prelapsarian world . . . Picasso's imagination has caught something where clothes were not known, nor agriculture, nor art.

Actually, the equally lovely, equally well-known painting of a naked boy leading an unsaddled horse has been painted in precisely the same spirit, and unlike *The Two Brothers* could not be mistaken for an interior scene. But perhaps there were no horses at the time Hilton is thinking of.

He has to cram 40 years of Picasso's art into the second half of the book, and has left out the following 20 years altogether, no doubt as unfit for salvage. His attitude takes an ugly turn when he introduces *The Dreams and Lies of Franco* and the great *Guernica* mural with the words: 'the socially-committed career of the ageing millionaire began with the upheaval in Spain'. What he has to say about *Guernica* is where we came in:

> The American artists – Pollock above all – well understood that *Guernica* was not, in itself, a progressive painting . . . Clement Greenberg, uniquely qualified to understand the American response to Picasso was precise and damning about the picture. His criticism is eloquent of the way that, as far as the new art was concerned, *Guernica* was felt to be irrelevant and even reactionary.

The answer to that is, Drips.

Dennis Potter is ill

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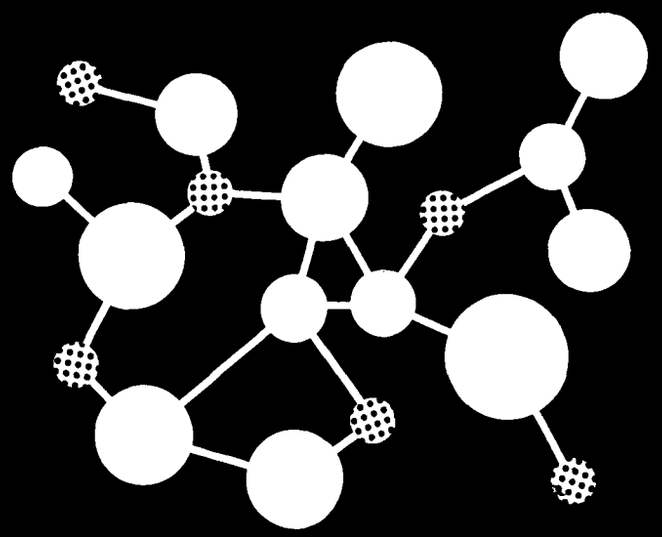

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Music

Bayan Northcott

Modern Maestro

Dallapiccola Memorial Concert *QEH*
Sex Carmina Alcaei; Piccola Musica Notturna; Preghiere *Argo ZRG* £3.25
Sicut Umbra; Tempus Destruendi/Tempus Aedificandi *Argo ZRG 791* £3.25

'But why didn't they call him a master when he was alive?' one of our most redoubtable senior composers could be heard protesting in the interval of the London Sinfonietta's Dallapiccola Memorial concert on 1 March. It was certainly disconcerting to learn that the performance of *Canti di Prigionia* which followed would actually have been the London premiere had the Schola Cantorum of Oxford not given it three days earlier; for these heartfelt choral settings of prayers from captivity, entrapped in steely accompaniments for pianos, harps and percussion, date back to the darkest days of 1938-41 and have long been recognised as Dallapiccola's earliest masterpiece. Nonetheless the belated accumulation of performances and recordings during the year since his death at least begins to offer some measure of his scope, from the sunny, impasto neo-classicism of the *Sei cori di Michelangelo Buonarotti il Giovane* of 1935 to the ascetic, serial lamentations of his last completed work from 1972, *Commiato* – both of them heard under the committed baton of Gary Bertini in the Sinfonietta concert.

Not that there was anything ascetic about Dallapiccola's initial approach to serial technique in the Forties. It would be difficult to imagine anything more serenely hedonistic than the floating, canonic textures of the *Sex Carmina Alcaei* (1943) for soprano and 11 instruments, whilst the delectable *Piccola Musica Notturna* (1954) sounds almost like a 12-note recension of Debussy's *Les parfums de la nuit*. It was only later in the Fifties that a more jagged, rhetorical style really emerged; the glacial numinosities of *Preghiere* (1962) occasionally paralleling Stravinsky's *A Sermon, A Narrative and A Prayer* of the same year so strikingly as to make one wonder which composer influenced the other the more. Most sensitively conducted by another noted devotee, Frederik Prausnitz, with Heather Harper radiant in the *Sex Carmina*, this re-issue in the Gulbenkian Series is an ideal introduction to Dallapiccola's music.

The more prophetic, biblical strain in his personality was to be summed up in the unaccompanied choral motets which comprise his penultimate opus, *Tempus Destruendi/Tempus Aedificandi* (1971): harsh expressions of desolation and fiery resolve which John Poole's BBC Singers have made very much their own. Their performance on another new Gulbenkian record is preceded, however, by *Sicut Umbra* (1970) for mezzo soprano and 12 instrument settings of meditations on death by the Spanish poet, Juan Ramón Jiménez, which equally seem to fulfil his more lyrical gifts. Most eloquently sung here by Sybil Michelow with the London Sinfonietta again under Bertini the work opens with tranced interweavings for three flutes and closes with glittering superimpositions of phrases derived from the shapes of the constellations in the night sky – a typical Dallapiccola conceit. To listen attentively through its sequence of delicate textures – at once so 'learned' in technique and so beautiful as sound – is to sense an irreducible quality which must preserve the best of his prayers and song cycles among the classics of the 20th century: every note in these musical mosaics seems to shine like a polished stone.

But what of his larger works? For the first complete catalogue in English published in the latest edition of the modern music quarterly, *Tempo*, reveals a body of orchestral and stage music, not to mention film scores, still virtually unheard in this country. As regards the longest of all, however, illumination is at hand. Leafing through the vast, exquisitely written facsimile score of his opera, *Ulisse* (1960-68), one can easily see why Dallapiccola regarded it as his most synoptic work, with its idyllic dallyings over Calypso, its dramatic liberation of Ithaca, and the metaphysical question mark of the old Ulysses's departure on the ultimate journey. It is on Radio 3 this Sunday.

Weekend Competition

No 2404 **Set by Robin Chase**

An oft-tried advertising trick rests on the principle that if you denounce your own products frenziedly enough, the consumer will be so impressed by your candour that he'll buy the goods anyway. Publishers are already trying it. See page 374 for Russell Davies on N. F. Simpson. Grovelling blurbs of about 120 words on any real or imaginary book by 2 April.

Result of No 2401
Set by Miles Backward

Competitors were asked to comment on the End of the World in the form of any regular NEW STATESMAN feature.

Report **by Spiro Keats**

Armageddon sick and tired of Armageddon Diary, Last Person, That England, Latters and the Worldend Competition. Actually, this was a sparkling comp – or at least will seem so to the NSocentric – and we could almost have filled an extra edition with Last Thoughts. £5 each.

Worldend Competition

Result of No 3547 **Set by E. O. Fagg**

Competitors were asked to provide a summary of how they intend spending the Last Day.

Report **by R. McGeddon**

Being the final competition we had to avoid the temptation to be nostalgic – but we couldn't print you all, could we? 309 entries flopped on to the Great Turnstile mat (including 23 from Tim O'Frawley, Ltd, and 19 from Meg Vita-Gracechurch and friends). The shortest entry – 'Get pissed' – was a group entry from the NUJ and £1 for it. The outright winner, however, was E. O. Fagg. So desperate was he to enter the Last Competition – which alas he had set – that he submitted a blank sheet of paper. This was not only a moving gesture, but symbolic of the terrible fate that awaits us all – and £5 for it. Commendations to Russell Veale, Gerry Premru, Unity Doubtfire, W. F. N. Foot, Unkel Thom Cobb-Lee and all the rest of you. It's been fun. TIM HOPKINS

Last Leader

. . . never seen the British in so convivial a mood. It seems that the entire population has lost its taste for work and is packing the pubs and clubs. Cabinet and Shadow Ministers were sprawled on the pavements outside El Vino's, playing liar-dice for ICI share certificates, and guzzling free champagne. Observing these disgruceful scones is a remonder of that. That. Whoops sentance cut of in its prime there. Where was I? Yes. Start again. It seems that the whole pipulation. Said that already dint I? Said thot two bottles ago. Pop that should have been. I mean population not pipulation. Ha! Hip Pip Pipulation! Bloodyfunny. Who cares about bloody end of werld anywhey? GERRY HAMILL

Armageddon Diary

☐ 'My Father,' said Jesus Christ to me on Judgment Day, 'was always an awkward Sod – and I suppose I didn't help by not coming again, but the first one was off-putting.' That still seems to me the best epitaph on his career as a Saviour – a career that brought him 1,976 years ago to a very nasty end. I can throw very little light on His Father's abrupt decision to bring the world to an end – though from the way God was thundering it did seem in some way to be linked with Nietzsche's canard that He was dead. So long as the modern theologians played ball he didn't mind too much, but apparently when they began referring to him as a 'Ground of being' he lost patience. T. GRIFFITHS

☐ This week's editorial conference was unusually calm, with only three of us left. It was also short, fortunately in view of the amount of writing I have to do, but it's refreshing to be able to turn my hand to new tasks. For a moment we thought we should have to be content with London Diary and the Competition but the true British spirit prevailed. We were thankful that James and Anthony had left some notes. I closed the meeting when Little Keith and Spiro Keat went out – touchingly, hand-in-hand – in a puff of smoke. I must be the first (and possibly the last) to succeed to the Editorship by natural causes. At least we outlived the *Spectator*; perhaps, after all, there is a God PETER ALEXANDER

Last Person

When Judgment Day was finally announced after 2,000 years of dilly-dallying I naturally made a note of it in my diary – only to find it's the day I start my summer holiday. On of life's little ironies that Hardy would have appreciated. I don't suppose I'll get my deposit back now; the travel people would argue that this is an Act of God if ever there was one.

We ought to start working ourselves up into an apocalyptic frame of mind but I'm afraid Armageddon sets up the wrong train of associations for me ('Ahm a-geddin used to it and all that). The Last Trump is no better ('Sorry, partner, I had to play the Ace – was my last trump'). I do hope I'll be able to keep a straight face on The Day. See you there. STANLEY J. SHARPLESS

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According to Wilde there is no sin except stupidity, And with Judgment Day almost upon us I only hope he was right. Rash, mistaken, misled, all these one may have been, but not, surely, all that stupid? Of course Wilde may have been wrong, in which event there will undoubtedly be a case to answer. As a small boy, the vain imaginings I had concerning Pantomime Principal Boys, not to mention Miss Champness of the Froebel School, convinced me of my irredeemable sinfulness. Yet oddly enough the older I have grown, having avoided what seem to me the worst sins such as murder, blackmail and swindling the poor, the more leniently I have come to regard the many ways in which I *have* erred and strayed. How awful if I've got it wrong. MARJORIE MATTHEWS

I see that Malcolm Muggeridge considers the Day of Wrath to be at hand. I respect his judgment, yet find myself oddly unmoved by it. Perhaps this is because I have vivid memories – I was about seven at the time – of my Aunt Angela's looking up from one of those dreadful little grey booklets entitled, *Millions Now Living Will Never Die* and saying quite seriously to my Father, 'Well, from what I can see of it, the world will end on 4 November.'

Horror of horrors: Judgment Day! I remembered with terror how during the past week I had said 'bloody' – twice. Happily, dear Uncle Lancelot gave me a puppy, and, in my gambols with this engaging creature, I forgot all about Judgment Day until Bonfire Night reminded me that Doom had unaccountably passed us by. G. J. BLUNDELL

Television

BBC enthusiasm for their exclusive *Panorama* interview with God must have been somewhat dampened when they heard what He had to say. There must have been a lot of frantic get-Him-off arm-waving, and the producers of the Sunday God-slot must have been kicking themselves in exquisite anguish. 'Nation shall speak unto Nation' seemed something of an understatement: here was God speaking to His people, who were represented by Robin Day, specially resurrected for the occasion. George Brown, interviewed later on the shiny new News, was, understandably, overcome with emotion. He must have been speaking for a whole squeaking bandwagon when he said that he knew God only slightly but had long admired Him to the edge of idolatry. *Terra Firma* on Sunday evening seemed more irrelevant than ever. LYNDON T. MOLE

Subsidising the 'Listener'

Sir, When my (I fear) long-forgotten predecessor Kenneth Lamb began the uphill task of convincing Crucible's equally immemorable predecessor Crucifer that our journal's noble ancestor the *Listener* was solvent, he was heard to remark that he would battle on if need be 'till Kingdom come'. Here we are, and I beg space in your last issue to repeat yet again that, although the paper was making a loss, its trading position was healthy, and that publication ceased only because, as we all know, sound broadcasting was ultimately replaced by direct cortical stimulation by laser beams. .

CS–X5476 28

Editor, *The Brainwave*

CRUCIBLE *writes*: This correspondence is now mercifully closed. C. VITA-FINZI

Assiac

Chess Board

No 1374 Three Cheers for Nowotny

Anton Nowotny died in 1871 at the age of 42, but he has his imperishable niche in endgame and problem literature for what might be called mutual interference on a critical square. For more than a century by now it has, of course, been a popular theme for problemists and study composers, but its appearance in actual game positions is fairly rare; hence, I was delighted to see it in a position by Tarrasch (White against a consulting team) in Naples 1914. /2r3r1/3q3p/p6b/Pkp1B3/1p1p4/1P1P1Q2 / 2R3PP / 2R3K1 /.

The Black K is exposed to mating threats at b7 and c5, both still adequately guarded. But what with c7 being the critical square White achieved a sort of 'Nowotny' by plonking his Bishop right there with the double mating threat at b7 and c5. That Bishop, of course, must go, but if **1) Bc7!!** is answered by . . . **Rc7**: the sequel is **2) Qb7†!!,Rb7:; 3) Rc5:††**; while . . . **Qc7**: fails against **2) Rc5:†!!,Qc5:; 3) Qb7†,Ka5:; 4) Ra1††**.

This pretty Tarrasch-plum was news to me (and presumably will be to most readers); we are indebted for it to Professor Michel who dug it out for *Deutsche Schachzeitung*; moreover, the Professor added two other Nowotny-type combinations, first Fuchs-Korchnoi, Erevan 1965: /r6k/pp2qppp/3R1kt2/4r3/2B2Q2/2Kt5/PPbR2PP/7K/.

The critical square, of course, is d3 and that's where the wily grandmaster dumped his Bishop, the reason being that neither of the Rooks can take it without interrupting the White Bishop's hold on f1, thereby permitting . . . Re1† & †† next move. What happened after **1)** . . . **Bd3!!** was **2) Bd3:,Qd6:; 3) Bf1,Qc5**; and White resigned.

Rather less brutal and more subtle is the Prof's third Nowotny, Koskinen-Kasman, Finland 1967. /kr1r4/7p/2bqp1p1/p7/1Pp1PP1P/K1B1ktKtPB/PP5R/RKt2Q3/.

This resembles the Tarrasch-beauty in that there are two mating threats at b4 and c2, both still adequately covered. The critical square, of course is d2 interfering with the Lady squinting at b4 and the Rook's watchful eye on c2. This time the Nowotny-type plong doesn't come at once; first we have to have **1)** . . . **Qb4:†!! 2) Bb4:**, and now the irresistable interference . . . **Rd2!!** which forces the issue as any proper Nowotny must. Obviously **3)** Rd2:, interrupting the Queen's hold on b4 would allow . . . ab:††, hence **3) Qd2**, but now comes . . . **Ktc2†!; 4) Qc2:,ab:††**.

The 4-pointer for beginners is a pretty if fairly obvious mate in 5. For 6 ladder-points **B** is a mate in three. Helpful hint: Horses galore. **C** (for 7) is a draw, a very neat *Tidscrift* 1st prize winner. Usual prizes, entries by 29 March.

A: Moisejevic-Ilievski 1974: /5bk1/1p4p1/4Kt1R1 / 3p4 / p1r2P1q / Pr1QP2P / 1P6 / 1K4R1/.

B: Sam Loyd 1876: /2K4Kt/3PP1k1/5Kt2/6kt1/32/.

C: C. A. Peronace 1953: /8/7p/1p4PP/k3K1Pb/6r1/24/.

Report of No 1367 *Set 30 January*

A: 1) Bc4!!,Qc4:; 2) Rg7:†,Kh8!; 3) Be5:!!,Qc2:; 4) Rf8†!,Rf8:; 5) Rg6:††.

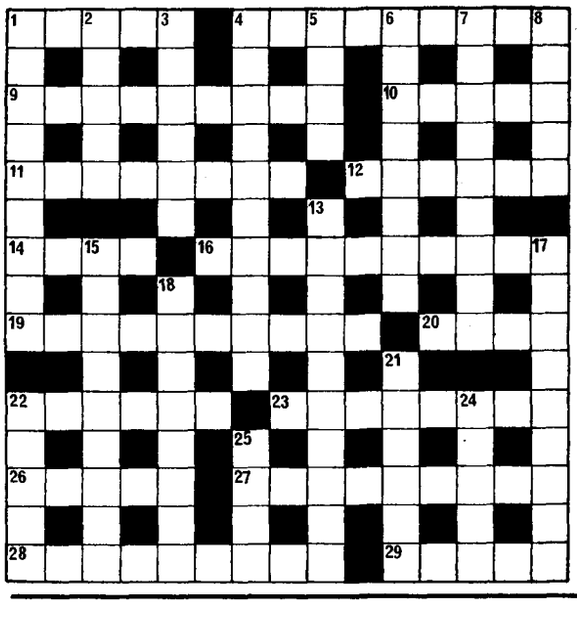
B: 1) Be7,a1=Q; 2) Bf6† etc. Or . . . **Kg7; 2) Bc5!,a1=Q; 3) Bd4†** etc.

C: 1) a7,Re8; 2) Bc6,Rf8; 3) a8=Q,Ra8:; 4) Ba8:,Kd3!; 5) Kb3,a4†; 6) Ka2,c2; 7) Be4†!,Ke4:; 8) Kb2,Kd3; 9) Kc1! and either . . . a3 or . . . Kc3 stalemates White.

Everybody spotted 5Blk in **B.** (Apologies for misprint). Many flawless entries. Prizes: J. Gill, C. Sansom, B. Silver, D. H. R. Stallybrass, R. Stern. Ladder No 106 (figures upped by School Comp.): 1: C. J. McSheehy (1040); 2: E. Allan (973); 3: G. W. Richardson (876); 4: H. A. Sparling (872); all back to scratch; (Ford, Sobey, Whitworth close behind, destined for 4 figures next time).

Weekend Crossword 1156

PRIZES: Book tokens of £2 for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1156, New Statesman, Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ, by first post 30 Mar.



ACROSS

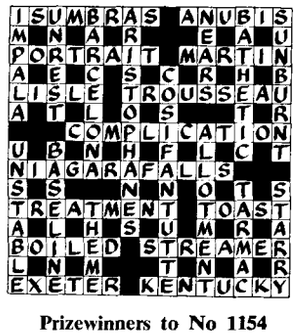
1. Animals produce writing without writing material (5).
4. Narrow escape when Brian says there's a run? (5, 4).
9. One cruel man goes crazy by numbers (9).
10. Festival without a second consumer (5).
11. Bushman or civic dignitary? (8).
12. Modern machines in quiet country ways (6).
14. Turner at the seaside (4).
16. Rhyming viewpoint (10).
19. Two kinds of biscuit for the ballet (10).
20. Spring comes in this year (4).
22. Double your money for a hero in pictures (6).
23. 'He makes a ——— end Fading in music' (*M. of Venice*) (8).
26. Famous singer gives it back after approving gesture (5).
27. As parties break up, unwelcome guests appear (9).
28. Beaten up and made hot, run away after surgical treatment (9).
29. Send nothing wrong when detected (5).

DOWN

1. If hatless the place would give a chap a healthy colour (9).
2. Entitled to reduce slightly the rising claim (5).
3. Wrongly arrest a writer (6).
4. Fabulous creature which keeps a cricket company (10).
5. Glance amorously when seen in fog less clearly (4).
6. It helps one to see, for example, about you and a girl (8).
7. Grow thin although we hear you dined with the PM (9).
8. Plays about birds (5).
13. The badly ruled drown in this deadly place (10).
15. When the famous climb on a mountain it makes a bang (9).
17. Gloomy when journalists go into action (9).
18. Religion in which a fish lives in a barrel (8).
21. Complete agreement Bob found in groups of workers (6).
22. Works as secretary or models (5).
24. Tiny letters? (5).
25. A friend's address is something precious (4).

SETSQUARE

Solution to No 1154



Prizewinners to No 1154

J. K. Ward (London NW7)
Tom Colverson (Kidlington)
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NEW STATESMAN
Vol. 91 No. 2348

Contents

344 **James Fenton:** Spotlight on Politics
345 **Paul Johnson:** The Plight of the Left
346 **John Porteous:** The Pound in Your Pocket
347 **David Leitch:** Giscard's Double Trouble
347 **Roger Woddis:** Knight of the Long Knives
348 **Allan Ashbolt:** Whitlam Rides the Storm
350 **John Griffith:** Workers, Shareholders and Boards
352 **Robert Fisk:** The Murder of Sammy Smyth
354 **Peter Wilby:** Education's Castaways
355 **Donald Gould:** Miracle Cures?
356 **Crucifer:** London Diary
357 **Anne Bennett:** What Hath Night To Do With Sleep?
357 **Arthur Marshall:** First Person
358 **Letters to the Editor**

Spring Books and Arts

361 **Malcolm Bradbury:** George Eliot
362 **John Fowles:** The Cleveland Street Scandal
Other reviews by David Lodge, Martin Amis, James Fenton, J. P. Stern, Valentine Cunningham, Russell Davies, Philip French
379 **Benedict Nightingale:** Theatre
380 **John Coleman:** Films
380 **Robert Melville:** Art
382 **Bayan Northcott:** Music
382 **Weekend Competition**
383 **Chess and Crossword**

Poems by Ted Hughes and D. J. Enright

Theatres

CITIZENS' THEATRE, Glasgow presents 7:84 Company England, from 23 to 27 March in 'Lay Off' 041-429 0022.

HAMPSTEAD THEATRE 7229301. 29 March to 3 April. Ortrude Beginnen, entertains! Germany's theatre sensation of the 70's. Tickets 90p and £1.50. Sat. mat. 5 p.m. Nightly 7.30 p.m.

ROYAL COURT 730 1745. Evs. at 8, Sats. 5 and 8.30 p.m. 'Parcel Post' by Yemi Ajibade.

THEATRE ROYAL, WINDSOR. 95 61107. 'Murder with Love', a new thriller by Francis Durbridge.

UNITY THEATRE at the Hampstead Theatre, Swiss Cottage 722 9301. Opening Mon. 22 March for 1 week, Unity Theatre presents 'The Tigers are Coming OK?' by Alan Plater. Evs 8 p.m. 90p.

VANBRUGH THEATRE CLUB. To 21 Mar. London premiere Dale Wasserman's American hit 'One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest'. From 1 April John Gay's famous musical 'The Beggar's Opera'. Details RADA, 62 Gower St, WC1. 636 7076.

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Poetry

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Meetings

EMPLOYMENT AND PLANNING: 2 lectures by David Eversley followed by discussion 2.30-6.30 p.m. Saturday 27 March. Tickets 60p (students and OAPs 30p) and details (s.a.e. please) from SASS, Goldsmiths' College, New Cross, London SE14 6NW, or at door.

CENTRAL LONDON FABIAN SOCIETY. Professor Peter Townsend on a Labour Party Policy to Defeat Poverty, 24 March 7.30 p.m. At 5-7 Tavistock Place, WC1. All welcome – collection.

THEODOR HERZL SOCIETY & Lond. University (E.-M. Dept), 57 Eton Ave, NW3. 8.15 p.m. Tuesday, 23 March. History of the Holy Land: Dr Tudor Parfitt on 'Old Jischuv & New Language – Population & Culture'.

YOUNG FABIAN GROUP Seminar on Unemployment. Chairman Frank Field. Sat. 20 March 10.30 to 4 p.m. 11 Dartmouth St, SW1. 50p. entrance. All welcome.

'WHITEHEAD, RUSSELL and Romanticism': *Peter Cronin. Sun. 21 March 11 a.m. Tues*day Discussion on theme 'Grounds for Hope' Tues. 23 March 7 p.m. 'The Theory and Practice of Alternative Technology': Gerard Morgan-Grenville. South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Sq., London WC1. 01-242 8032/3.

ENP LONDON MEETING. 'Two Brewers', Monmouth St. 22 Mar. 6 p.m. Conference Notts University, 9-11 April. 01-852 0627.

THE TIBET SOCIETY OF U.K. 46 Belgrave Sq., London SW1. Open Mon.-Thurs. and Sat. 10 a.m.-6 p.m., callers welcome. Details for Spring meetings, celebration of 'Tibetan New Year', 'Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism', etc., news-letter, book service, Tibetan crafts, and other facilities on request. 01-235 3720.

YOUNG FABIAN GROUP. Tues. 23 March 7.30 p.m. Brian Magee MP speaks on 'The Social Background of British Politics Today'. 11 Dartmouth St, London SW1.

MAPAM – YOUNG MAPAM. Leslie Huckfield M.P., Chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Friends of Israel, will speak on 'The British Labour Movement & Israel Today.' Time: Sun. 21 March 8.15 p.m. Place: 37 Broadhurst Gardens, NW6. (Nearest Tube Finchley Rd.). All welcome.

BUDDHIST SOCIETY, 58 Eccleston Square, London SW1. Sat. 20 March 3 p.m. 'Open Day'. Tues. 23 March 6.30 p.m. 'Introducing Buddhism'. Wed. 24 March 6.30 p.m. 'Mahayana Buddhism & Theravada Buddhism', two separate Study and Discussion Groups. All welcome. Send s.a.e. for full programme.

THEOSOPHY Commemoration Meeting. Sun. 22 Mar. 8 p.m. 'W.Q. Judge: The Victorious Disciple'. S.a.e. for programme, book list and literature. ULT, 62 Queen's Gardens, London W2 3AL.

Courses

SHORT COURSES: *'Roots of Conflict'* (South Africa, Ireland) 10-11 April. £8 inclusive. Comprehensive Schooling. 'The Community's Challenge' 12-15 April. £15 inclusive. Easthampstead Park Adult College, Wokingham, RG11 3DF.

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